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THE

BRITISH DRAMA.

THE

BRITISH DRAMA;

COMPREHENDING

THE BEST PLAYS

IN

THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

TRAGEDIES.

VOL. I.—PART II.

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THE

BRITISH DRAMA.

ZARA.

BY

HILL.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

OSMAN, *Sultan of Jerusalem.*
LUSIGNAN, *last of the blood of the Christian kings of Jerusalem.*
NERESTAN, CHATILLON, } *French officers.*
ORASMIN, *Minister to the Sultan.*
MELIDOR, *an officer of the Seraglio.*

WOMEN.

ZARA, SELIMA } *Slaves of the Sultan.*

Scene—Jerusalem.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter ZARA *and* SELIMA.

Sel. It moves my wonder, young and beauteous Zara,
Whence these new sentiments inspire your heart!
Your peace of mind increases with your charms;
Tears now no longer shade your eyes soft lustre:
You meditate no more those happy climes,
To which Nerestan will return to guide you.
You talk no more of that gay nation now,
Where men adore their wives, and woman's power
Draws reverence from a polished people's softness:
Their husbands' equals, and their lovers' queens!
Free without scandal; wise without restraint;
Their virtue due to nature, not to fear.
Why have you ceased to wish this happy change?
A barred seraglio!—sad, unsocial life!
Scorned, and a slave! All this has lost its terror;
And Syria rivals, now, the banks of Seine!

Zar. Joys, which we do not know, we do not wish.
My fate's bound in by Sion's sacred wall:
Closed, from my infancy, within this palace,
Custom has learnt, from time, the power to please.
I claim no share in the remoter world,
The sultan's property, his will my law;
Unknowing all but him, his power, his fame;
To live his subject is my only hope,
All else an empty dream.——

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Sel. Have you forgot
Absent Nerestan then? whose generous friendship
So nobly vowed redemption from your chains!
How oft have you admired his dauntless soul!
Osman, his conqueror, by his courage charmed,
Trusted his faith, and on his word released him:
Though not returned in time—we yet expect him.
Nor had his noble journey other motive,
Than to procure our ransom.—And is this,
This dear, warm hope, become an idle dream?
Zar. Since after two long years he not returns,
'Tis plain his promise stretched beyond his power.
A stranger and a slave, unknown, like him,
Proposing much, means little;—talks and vows,
Delighted with a prospect of escape:——
He promised to ransom ten Christians more,
And free us all from slavery!—I own
I once admired the unprofitable zeal,
But now it charms no longer.———
Sel. What if yet,
He, faithful, should return, and hold his vow;
Would you not, then——
Zar. No matter——Time is past,
And every thing is changed——
Sel. But, whence comes this?
Zar. Go—'twere too much to tell thee Zara's fate:
The sultan's secrets, all, are sacred here:
But my fond heart delights to mix with thine.
Some three months past, when thou, and other slaves,
Were forced to quit fair Jordan's flowery bank;
Heaven, to cut short the anguish of my days,
Raised me to comfort by a powerful hand:
This mighty Osman!———
Sel. What of him?
Zar. This sultan,
This conqueror of the Christians, loves——
Sel. Whom?
Zar. Zara!——
Thou blushest, and I guess thy thoughts accuse me:
But, know me better——'twas unjust suspicion.
All emperor as he is, I cannot stoop
To honours, that bring shame and baseness with them:
Reason and pride, those props of modesty,
Sustain my guarded heart, and strengthen virtue:
Rather than sink to infamy, let chains
Embrace me with a joy, such love denies!
No—I shall now astonish thee;—His greatness
Submits to own a pure and honest flame.
Among the shining crowds, which live to please him,
His whole regard is fixed on me alone:
He offers marriage; and its rites now wait,
To crown me empress of this eastern world.
Sel. Your virtue and your charms deserve it all:
My heart is not surprised, but struck to hear it.
If to be empress can complete your happiness,
I rank myself, with joy, among your slaves.
Zar. Be still my equal——and enjoy my blessings;
For, thou partaking, they will bless me more.
Sel. Alas! but Heaven! will it permit this marriage?
Will not this grandeur, falsely called a bliss,
Plant bitterness, and root it in your heart?
Have you forgot you are of Christian blood?
Zar. Ah me! What hast thou said? why wouldst thou thus
Recal my wavering thoughts? How know I, what,
Or whence I am? Heaven kept it hid in darkness,
Concealed me from myself, and from my blood.
Sel. Nerestan, who was born a Christian, here
Asserts, that you, like him, had Christian parents;
Besides——that cross, which, from your infant years
Has been preserved, was found upon your bosom,
As if designed by Heaven, a pledge of faith
Due to the God you purpose to forsake!
Zar. Can my fond heart, on such a feeble proof,
Embrace a faith, abhorred by him I love?
I see too plainly custom forms us all;
Our thoughts, our morals, our most fixed belief,
Are consequences of our place of birth:
Born beyond Ganges, I had been a Pagan;
In France, a Christian; I am here a Saracen:
'Tis but instruction, all! Our parents' hand
Writes on our heart the first faint characters,
Which time, re-tracing, deepens into strength,
That nothing can efface, but death or Heaven!
Thou wert not made a prisoner in this place,
Till after reason, borrowing force from years,
Had lent its lustre to enlighten faith:——
For me, who, in my cradle, was their slave,
Thy Christian doctrines were too lately taught me;
Yet, far from having lost the reverence due,
This cross, as often as it meets my eye,
Strikes through my heart a kind of awful fear!
I honour, from my soul, the Christian law;
Those laws, which, softening nature by humanity,
Melt nations into brotherhood;—no doubt
Christians are happy; and 'tis just to love them.
Sel. Why have you, then, declared yourself their foe?
Why will you join your hand with this proud Osman's,
Who owes his triumph to the Christian ruin?
Zar. Ah!—who could slight the offer of his heart?
Nay—for I mean to tell thee all my weakness—
Perhaps I had, ere now, profest thy faith,
But Osman loved me—and I've lost it all!—
I think on none but Osman—my pleased heart,
Filled with the blessing, to be loved by him,
Wants room for other happiness. Place thou
Before thy eyes, his merit and his fame,
His youth, yet blooming but in manhood's dawn,

How many conquered kings have swelled his power!
Think, too, how lovely! how his brow becomes
This wreath of early glories!—Oh, my friend!
I talk not of a sceptre, which he gives me:
No—to be charmed with that were thanks too humble!
Offensive tribute, and too poor for love!
'Twas Osman won my heart, not Osman's crown:
I love not in him aught besides himself.
Though think'st, perhaps, that these are starts of passion:
But, had the will of Heaven, less bent to bless him,
Doomed Osman to my chains, and me to fill
The throne that Osman sits on—ruin and wretchedness
Catch and consume my wishes, but I would——
To raise me to myself, descend to him.

Sel. Hark! the wished music sounds—'Tis he—he comes—— [*Exit Selima.*

Zar. My heart prevented him, and found him near:
Absent two long whole days, the slow-paced hour
At last is come, and gives him to my wishes!
[*A grand march.*

Enter Osman, *reading a paper, which he re-delivers to* Orasmin; *with Attendants.*

Osm. Wait my return—or, should there be a cause
That may require my presence, do not fear
To enter; ever mindful, that my own
[*Exit Oras. &c.*
Follows my people's happiness.—At length,
Cares have released my heart—to love and Zara.

Zar. 'Twas not in cruel absence, to deprive me
Of your imperial image—every where
You reign triumphant: memory supplies
Reflection with your power; and you, like Heaven,
Are always present—and are always gracious.

Osm. The sultans, my great ancestors, bequeathed
Their empire to me, but their taste they gave not;
Their laws, their lives, their loves, delight not me:
I know our prophet smiles on am'rous wishes,
And opens a wide field to vast desire;
I know, that at my will I might possess;
That, wasting tenderness in wild profusion,
I might look down to my surrounded feet,
And bless contending beauties. I might speak,
Serenely slothful, from within my palace,
And bid my pleasure be my people's law.
But, sweet as softness is, its end is cruel.
I can look round, and count a hundred kings,
Unconquered by themselves, and slaves to others:
Hence was Jerusalem to christians lost;
But Heaven, to blast that unbelieving race,
Taught me to be a king, by thinking like one.
Hence, from the distant Euxine to the Nile,
The trumpet's voice has waked the world to war;
Yet, amidst arms and death, thy power has reached me;
For thou disdain'st, like me, a languid love;
Glory and Zara join—and charm together.

Zar. I hear at once, with blushes and with joy,
This passion, so unlike your country's customs.

Osm. Passion, like mine, disdains my country's customs;
The jealousy, the faintness, the distrust,
The proud, superior coldness of the East.
I know to love you, Zara, with esteem;
To trust your virtue, and to court your soul.
Nobly confiding, I unveil my heart,
And dare inform you, that 'tis all your own:
My joys must all be yours: only my cares
Shall lie concealed within—and reach not Zara.

Zar. Obliged by this excess of tenderness,
How low, how wretched was the lot of Zara!
Too poor with aught, but thanks, to pay such blessings!

Osm. Not so—I love—and would be loved again;
Let me confess it, I possess a soul,
That what it wishes, wishes ardently.
I should believe you hated, had you power
To love with moderation: 'tis my aim,
In every thing, to reach supreme perfection.
If, with an equal flame, I touch your heart,
Marriage attends your smile—But know, 'twill make
Me wretched, if it makes not Zara happy.

Zar. Ah, sir! if such a heart as generous Osman's
Can, from my will, submit to take its bliss,
What mortal ever was decreed so happy!
Pardon the pride with which I own my joy,
Thus wholly to possess the man I love!
To know, and to confess his will my fate!
To be the happy work of his dear hands!
To be—

Enter Orasmin.

Osm. Already interrupted! What?
Who?—Whence?

Oras. This moment, sir, there is arrived
That Christian slave, who, licensed on his faith,
Went hence to France—and, now returned, prays audience.

Zar. [*Aside.*] Oh, Heaven!

Osm. Admit him—What?—Why comes he not?

Oras. He waits without. No Christian dares approach
This place, long sacred to the sultan's privacies.

Osm. Go—bring him with thee—monarchs, like the sun,
Shine but in vain, unwarming, if unseen;
With forms and reverence, let the great approach us;

Not the unhappy;—every place alike,
Gives the distressed a privilege to enter.——
[*Exit Oras.*
I think with horror on these dreadful maxims,
Which harden kings insensibly to tyrants.

Re-enter ORASMIN *with* NERESTAN.

Ner. Imperial sultan! honoured, even by foes!
See me returned, regardful of my vow,
And punctual to discharge a Christian's duty.
I bring the ransom of the captive Zara,
Fair Selima, the partner of her fortune,
And of ten Christian captives, prisoners here.
You promised, sultan, if I should return,
To grant their rated liberty:—Behold,
I am returned, and they are yours no more.
I would have stretched my purpose to myself,
But fortune has denied it;—my poor all
Sufficed no further, and a noble poverty
Is now my whole possession.—I redeem
The promised Christians; for I taught them hope:
But, for myself, I come again your slave,
To wait the fuller hand of future charity.
Osm. Christian! I must confess thy courage charms me!
But let thy pride be taught, it treads too high,
When it presumes to climb above my mercy.
Go ransomless thyself, and carry back
Their unaccepted ransoms, joined with gifts,
Fit to reward thy purpose; instead of ten,
Demand a hundred Christians; they are thine:
Take them, and bid them teach their haughty country,
They left some virtue among Saracens.—
Be Lusignan alone excepted—He,
Who boasts the blood of kings, and dares lay claim
To my Jerusalem—that claim, his guilt!
Such is the law of states; had I been vanquished,
Thus had he said of me. I mourn his lot,
Who must in fetters, lost to day-light pine,
And sigh away old age in grief and pain.
For Zara—but to name her as a captive,
Were to dishonour language;—she's a prize
Above thy purchase:—all the Christian realms,
With all their kings to guide them, would unite
In vain, to force her from me—Go, retire—
Ner. For Zara's ransom, with her own consent,
I had your royal word. For Lusignan—
Unhappy, poor, old man——
Osm. Was I not heard?
Have I not told thee, Christian, all my will?
What if I praised thee!—This presumptuous virtue,
Compelling my esteem, provokes my pride;
Be gone—and when to-morrow's sun shall rise
On my dominions, be not found—too near me.
[*Exit Nerestan.*
Zar. [*Aside.*] Assist him, Heaven!
Osm. Zara, retire a moment—
Assume, throughout my palace, sovereign empire,
While I give orders to prepare the pomp
That waits to crown thee mistress of my throne.
[*Leads her out and returns.*
Orasmin! didst thou mark the imperious slave!
What could he mean?—he sighed—and, as he went,
Turned and looked back at Zara!—didst thou mark it?
Oras. Alas! my sovereign master! let not jealousy
Strike high enough to reach your noble heart.
Osm. Jealousy, said'st thou? I disdain it:—No!
Distrust is poor; and a misplaced suspicion
Invites and justifies the falsehood feared.—
Yet, as I love with warmth—so, I could hate!
But Zara is above disguise and art:——
My love is stronger, nobler, than my power.
Jealous!—I was not jealous! If I was,
I am not—no—my heart—but, let us drown
Remembrance of the word, and of the image:
My heart is filled with a diviner flame.—
Go, and prepare for the approaching nuptials.
Zara to careful empire joins delight.
I must allot one hour to thoughts of state,
Then, all the smiling day is love and Zara's.
[*Exit Orasmin.*
Monarchs, by forms of pompous misery pressed,
In proud, unsocial misery, unblessed,
Would, but for love's soft influence, curse their throne,
And, among crowded millions, live alone. [*Exit.*

ACT. II.

SCENE I.

NERESTAN, CHATILLON.

Cha. MATCHLESS Nerestan! generous and great!
You, who have broke the chains of hopeless slaves!
You, Christian saviour! by a Saviour sent!
Appear, be known, enjoy your due delight;
The grateful weepers wait to clasp your knees,
They throng to kiss the happy hand that saved them:
Indulge the kind impatience of their eyes,
And, at their head, command their hearts for ever.
Ner. Illustrious Chatillon! this praise o'erwhelms me;
What have I done beyond a Christian's duty;
Beyond what you would, in my place, have done?
Chat. True—it is every honest Christian's duty;
Nay, 'tis the blessing of such minds as ours,
For others' good to sacrifice our own.—
Yet, happy they, to whom Heaven grants the power,

To execute, like you, that duty's call.
For us—the relicks of abandoned war,
Forgot in France, and in Jerusalem,
Left to grow old in fetters,—Osman's father
Consigned us to the gloom of a damp dungeon,
Where, but for you, we must have groaned out life,
And native France have blessed our eyes no more.

Ner. The will of gracious Heaven, that softened Osman,
Inspired me for your sakes :—But, with our joy,
Flows, mixed, a bitter sadness—I had hoped
To save from their perversion a young beauty,
Who, in her infant innocence, with me,
Was made a slave by cruel Noradin;
When, sprinkling Syria with the blood of Christians,
Cæsarea's walls saw Lusignan surprized,
And the proud crescent rise in bloody triumph.
From this seraglio having young escaped,
Fate, three years since, restored me to my chains;
Then, sent to Paris on my plighted faith,
I flattered my fond hope with vain resolves,
To guide the lovely Zara to that court
Where Lewis has established virtue's throne:
But Osman will detain her—yet, not Osman;
Zara herself forgets she is a Christian,
And loves the tyrant sultan!—Let that pass:
I mourn a disappointment still more cruel;
The prop of all our Christian hope is lost!

Chat. Dispose me at your will—I am your own.

Ner. Oh, Sir, great Lusignan, so long their captive,
That last of an heroic race of kings!
That warrior, whose past fame has filled the world!
Osman refuses to my sighs for ever!

Chat. Nay, then, we have been all redeemed in vain;
Perish that soldier who would quit his chains,
And leave his noble chief behind in fetters.
Alas! you know him not as I have known him;
Thank Heaven, that placed your birth so far removed
From those detested days of blood and woe:
But I, less happy, was condemned to see
Thy walls, Jerusalem, beat down—and all
Our pious fathers' labours lost in ruins!
Heaven! had you seen the very temple rifled!
The sacred sepulchre itself profaned!
Fathers with children mingled, flame together!
And our last king, oppressed with age and arms,
Murdered, and bleeding o'er his murdered sons!
Then Lusignan, sole remnant of his race,
Rallying our fated few amidst the flames,
Fearless, beneath the crush of falling towers,
The conquerors and the conquered, groans and death!
Dreadful—and, waving in his hand his sword,
Red with the blood of infidels cried out,
This way, ye faithful Christians! follow me.——

Ner. How full of glory was that brave retreat!

Chat. 'Twas Heaven, no doubt, that saved and led him on;
Pointed his path, and marched our guardian guide:
We reached Cæsarea—there the general voice
Chose Lusignan, thenceforth to give us laws;
Alas! 'twas vain—Cæsarea could not stand
When Sion's self was fallen!—we were betrayed;
And Lusignan condemned to length of life,
In chains, in damps, and darkness and despair:
Yet great, amidst his miseries, he looked,
As if he could not feel his fate himself,
But as it reached his followers. And shall we,
For whom our generous leader suffered this,
Be vilely safe, and dare be blessed without him?

Ner. Oh! I should hate the liberty he shared not.
I knew too well the miseries you describe,
For I was born amidst them. Chains and death,
Cæsarea lost, and Saracens triumphant,
Were the first objects which my eyes e'er looked on.
Hurried, an infant, among other infants,
Snatched from the bosom of their bleeding mothers,
A temple saved us, till the slaughter ceased;
Then were we sent to this ill-fated city,
Here, in the palace of our former kings,
To learn, from Saracens, their hated faith,
And be completely wretched.——Zara, too,
Shared this captivity; we both grew up
So near each other, that a tender friendship
Endeared her to my wishes: My fond heart—
Pardon its weakness, bleeds to see her lost,
And, for a barbarous tyrant, quit her God!

Chat. Such is the Saracens' too fatal policy!
Watchful seducers, still, of infant weakness:
Happy that you, so young, escaped their hands!
But let us think——May not this Zara's interest,
Loving the sultan, and by him beloved,
For Lusignan procure some softer sentence?
The wise and just, with innocence, may draw
Their own advantage from the guilt of others.

Ner. How shall I gain admission to her presence?
Osman has banished me—but that's a trifle;
Will the seraglio's portals open to me?
Or, could I find that easy to my hopes,
What prospect of success from an apostate,
On whom I cannot look without disdain,
And who will read her shame upon my brow?
The hardest trial of a generous mind,
Is, to court favours from a hand it scorns.

Chat. Think it is Lusignan we seek to serve.

Ner. Well—it shall be attempted—Hark! who is this?
Are my eyes false; or, is it really she?

Enter ZARA.

Zar. Start not, my worthy friend! I come to seek you;

The sultan has permitted it; fear nothing:——
But to confirm my heart, which trembles near you,
Soften that angry air, nor look reproach;
Why should we fear each other, both mistaking?
Associates from our birth, one prison held us,
One friendship taught affliction to be calm,
'Till Heaven thought fit to favour your escape,
And call you to the fields of happier France;
Thence, once again, it was my lot to find you
A prisoner here; where, hid amongst a crowd
Of undistinguished slaves, with less restraint,
I shared your frequent converse;———
It pleased your pity, shall I say your friendship?
Or rather, shall I call it generous charity?
To form that noble purpose, to redeem
Distressful Zara—you procured my ransom,
And, with a greatness that out-soared a crown,
Returned yourself a slave, to give me freedom;
But Heaven has cast our fate for different climes:
Here, in Jerusalem, I fix for ever;
Yet, among all the shine that marks my fortune,
I shall, with frequent tears, remember yours;
Your goodness will for ever soothe my heart,
And keep your image still a dweller there:
Warmed by your great example to protect
That faith, which lifts humanity so high,
I'll be a mother to distressful Christians.

Ner. How!—You protect the Christians! you, who can
Abjure their saving faith, and coldly see
Great Lusignan, their chief, die slow in chains!

Zar. To bring him freedom you behold me here;
You will this moment meet his eyes in joy.

Chat. Shall I then live to bless that happy hour?

Ner. Can Christians owe so dear a gift to Zara?

Zar. Hopeless I gathered courage to intreat
The sultan for his liberty—amazed,
So soon to gain the happiness I wished!
See where they bring the good old chief, grown dim
With age, by pain and sorrows hastened on!

Chat. How is my heart dissolved with sudden joy!

Zar. I long to view his venerable face;
But tears, I know not why, eclipse my sight.
I feel, methinks, redoubled pity for him;
But, I, alas! myself have been a slave;
And when we pity woes which we have felt,
'Tis but a partial virtue!

Ner. Amazement!—Whence this greatness in an infidel!

Enter LUSIGNAN *led in by two Guards.*

Lus. Where am I? From the dungeon's depth what voice
Has called me to revisit long-lost day?
Am I with Christians?—I am weak—forgive me,
And guide my trembling steps. I'm full of years;
My miseries have worn me more than age.
Am I, in truth, at liberty? [*Seating himself.*

Chat. You are;
And every Christian's grief takes end with yours.

Lus. O light! O, dearer far than light, that voice!
Chatillon, is it you? my fellow-martyr?
And shall our wretchedness, indeed, have end?
In what place are we now!—my feeble eyes,
Disused to day-light, long in vain to find you.

Chat. This was the palace of your royal fathers:
'Tis now the son of Noradin's seraglio.

Zar. The master of this place—the mighty Osman,
Distinguishes, and loves to cherish virtue.
This generous Frenchman, yet a stranger to you,
Drawn from his native soil, from peace and rest,
Brought the vowed ransoms of ten Christian slaves,
Himself contented to remain a captive:
But Osman, charmed by greatness, like his own,
To equal what he loved, has given him you.

Lus. So generous France inspires her social sons!
They have been ever dear and useful to me—
Would I were nearer to him—Noble sir,
[*Nerestan approaches.*
How have I merited, that you for me
Should pass such distant seas, to bring me blessings,
And hazard your own safety for my sake?

Ner. My name, sir, is Nerestan; born in Syria,
I wore the chains of slavery from my birth;
Till, quitting the proud crescent for the court
Where warlike Lewis reigns, beneath his eye
I learnt the trade of arms: the rank I held
Was but the kind distinction which he gave me,
To tempt my courage to deserve regard.
Your sight, unhappy prince, would charm his eye;
That best and greatest monarch will behold,
With grief and joy, those venerable wounds,
And print embraces where your fetters bound you.
All Paris will revere the cross's martyr;
Paris, the refuge still of ruined kings!

Lus. Alas! in times long past, I have seen its glory:
When Philip the Victorious lived, I fought
A-breast with Montmorency and Melun,
D'Estaing, De Neile, and the far-famous Courcy;
Names which were then the praise and dread of war!
But what have I to do at Paris now?
I stand upon the brink of the cold grave;
That way my journey lies—to find, I hope,
The King of Kings, and ask the recompence
For all my woes, long suffered for his sake——
You generous witnesses of my last hour,
While I yet live, assist my humble prayers,
And join the resignation of my soul.
Nerestan! Chatillon! and you, fair mourner!
Whose tears do honour to an old man's sorrows!

Pity a father, the unhappiest sure
That ever felt the hand of angry heaven!
My eyes, though dying, still can furnish tears;
Half my long life they flowed, and still will flow!
A daughter and three sons, my heart's proud hopes,
Were all torn from me in their tend'rest years—
My friend Chatillon knows, and can remember——
Chat. Would I were able to forget your woe.
Lus. Thou wert a prisoner with me in Cæsarea,
And there beheld'st my wife and two dear sons
Perish in flames.
Chat. A captive and in fetters,
I could not help them.
Lus. I know thou couldst not——
Oh, 'twas a dreadful scene! these eyes beheld it.
Husband and father, helpless I beheld it—
Denied the mournful privilege to die!
Oh, my poor children! whom I now deplore;
If ye are saints in Heaven, as sure ye are,
Look with an eye of pity on that brother,
That sister whom you left! If I have yet
Or son or daughter: for in early chains,
Far from their lost and unassisting father,
I heard that they were sent, with numbers more,
To this seraglio; hence to be dispersed
In nameless remnants o'er the East, and spread
Our Christian miseries round a faithless world.
Chat. 'Twas true—For in the horrors of that day,
I snatched your infant daughter from her cradle;
But, finding every hope of flight was vain,
Scarce had I sprinkled, from a public fountain,
Those sacred drops which wash the soul from sin,
When from my bleeding arms, fierce Saracens
Forced the lost innocent, who smiling lay,
And pointed, playful, at the swarthy spoilers!
With her, your youngest, then your only son,
Whose little life had reached the fourth sad year,
And just given sense to feel his own misfortunes,
Was ordered to this city.
Ner. I too, hither,
Just at that fatal age, from lost Cæsarea,
Came in that crowd of undistinguished Christians.——
Lus. You! came you thence? Alas! who knows but you
Might heretofore have seen my two poor children.
[*Looking up.*] Ah, madam! that small ornament you wear,
Its form a stranger to this country's fashion,
How long has it been yours?
Zar. From my first birth, sir——
Ah, what! you seem surprised! why should this move you?
Lus. Would you confide it to my trembling hands?
Zar. To what new wonders am I now reserved?
Oh, sir! what mean you?
Lus. Providence and Heaven!
Oh, failing eyes, deceive ye not my hope?
Can this be possible?—Yes, yes—'tis she!
This little cross—I know it, by sure marks!
Oh! take me, Heaven! while I can die with joy——
Zar. Oh, do not, sir, distract me!—rising thoughts,
And hopes, and fears, o'erwhelm me!
Lus. Tell me, yet,
Has it remained for ever in your hands?
What——both brought captives from Cæsarea hither!
Zar. Both, both——
Oh, Heaven! have I then found a father?
Lus. Their voice! their looks!
The living images of their dear mother!
O God! who see'st my tears, and knowest my thoughts,
Do not forsake me at this dawn of hope——
Strengthen my heart, too feeble for this joy.
Madam! Nerestan! Help me, Chatillon!
[*Rising.*
Nerestan, hast thou on thy breast a scar,
Which, ere Cæsarea fell, from a fierce hand,
Surprising us by night, my child received?
Ner. Blessed hand!—I bear it—sir, the mark is there!
Lus. Merciful Heaven!
Ner. [*Kneeling.*] Oh, sir!—Oh, Zara, kneel.—
Zar. [*Kneeling.*] My father!—Oh!——
Lus. Oh, my lost children!
Both. Oh!
Lus. My son! my daughter! lost in embracing you,
I would now die, lest this should prove a dream!
Chat. How touched is my glad heart, to see their joy!
Lus. They shall not tear you from my arms—my children!
Again, I find you—dear in wretchedness:
Oh, my brave son—and thou, my nameless daughter!
Now dissipate all doubt, remove all dread;
Has Heaven, that gives me back my children—given them,
Such as I lost them?—Come they Christians to me?
One weeps, and one declines a conscious eye!
Your silence speaks—too well I understand it.
Zar. I cannot, sir, deceive you—Osman's laws
Were mine—and Osman is not a Christian.——
Lus. Her words are thunder bursting on my head;
Wert not for thee, my son, I now should die!
Full sixty years I fought the Christian cause,
Saw their doomed temple fall, their power destroyed:
Twenty, a captive, in a dungeon's depth,
Yet never for myself my tears sought Heaven;
All for my children rose my fruitless prayers:
Yet what avails a father's wretched joy?

I have a daughter gained, and Heaven an enemy.
Oh! my misguided daughter—lose not thy faith,
Reclaim thy birthright—think upon the blood
Of twenty Christian kings, that fills thy veins;
'Tis heroes' blood—the blood of saints and martyrs!
What would thy mother feel, to see thee thus!
She, and thy murdered brothers!—think, they call thee;
Think that thou seest them stretch their bloody arms,
And weep to win thee from their murderer's bosom.
Even in the place where thou betrayest thy God,
He died, my child, to save thee.—Turn thy eyes,
And see; for thou art near his sacred sepulchre;
Thou canst not move a step, but where he trod!
Thou tremblest—Oh! admit me to thy soul;
Kill not thy aged, thy afflicted father;
Take not thus soon, again, the life thou gavest him:
Shame not thy mother—nor renounce thy God.
'Tis past—Repentance dawns in thy sweet eyes;
I see bright truth descending to thy heart,
And now, my long-lost child is found for ever!
Ner. Oh, doubly blest! a sister, and a soul,
To be redeemed together!
Zar. Oh, my father!
Dear author of my life! inform me, teach me,
What should my duty do?
Lus. By one short word,
To dry up all my tears, and make life welcome,
Say thou art a Christian———
Zar. Sir—I am a Christian.
Lus. Receive her, gracious Heaven! and bless her for it.

Enter ORASMIN.

Oras. Madam, the sultan ordered me to tell you,
That he expects you instant quit this place,
And bid your last farewell to these vile Christians.
You, captive Frenchmen, follow me; for you,
It is my task to answer.——
Chat. Still new miseries!
How cautious man should be, to say, I'm happy!
Lus. These are the times, my friends, to try our firmness,
Our Christian firmness.———
Zar. Alas, sir! Oh!
Lus. Oh, you!—I dare not name you!
Farewell—but, come what may, be sure remember
You keep the fatal secret! for the rest,
Leave all to Heaven—be faithful, and be blest.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter OSMAN *and* ORASMIN.

Osm. ORASMIN, this alarm was false and groundless;
Lewis no longer turns his arms on me;
The French, grown weary by a length of woes,
Wish not at once to quit their fruitful plains,
And famish on Arabia's desart sands.
Their ships, 'tis true, have spread the Syrian seas;
And Lewis, hovering o'er the coast of Cyprus,
Alarms the fears of Asia—But I've learnt,
That, steering wide from our unmenaced ports,
He points his thunder at the Egyptian shore.
There let him war, and waste my enemies;
Their mutual conflict will but fix my throne.
Release those Christians—I restore their freedom;
'Twill please their master, nor can weaken me;
Transport them at my cost, to find their king;
I wish to have him know me: carry thither
This Lusignan, whom, tell him, I restore,
Because I cannot fear his fame in arms;
But love him for his virtue and his blood.
Tell him, my father, having conquered twice,
Condemned him to perpetual chains; but I
Have set him free, that I might triumph more.
Oras. The Christians gain an army in his name.
Osm. I cannot fear a sound.——
Oras. But, sir——should Lewis——
Osm. Tell Lewis, and the world—it shall be so:
Zara proposed it, and my heart approves:
Thy statesman's reason is too dull for love!
Why wilt thou force me to confess it all?
Though I to Lewis send back Lusignan,
I give him but to Zara—I have grieved her;
And owed her the atonement of this joy.
Thy false advices, which but now misled
My anger, to confine those helpless Christians,
Gave her a pain; I feel for her and me:
But I talk on, and waste the smiling moments.
For one long hour I yet defer my nuptials;
But, 'tis not lost, that hour! 'twill be all hers!
She would employ it in a conference
With that Nerestan, whom thou know'st—that Christian.
Oras. And have you, sir, indulged that strange desire?
Osm. What meanest thou? They were infant slaves together;
Friends should part kind, who are to meet no more.
When Zara asks, I will refuse her nothing:
Restraint was never made for those we love.
Down with those rigours of the proud seraglio;
I hate its laws—where blind austerity
Sinks virtue to necessity.—My blood

Disclaims your Asian jealousy;—I hold
The fierce, free plainness of my Scythian ancestors,
Their open confidence, their honest hate,
Their love unfearing, and their anger bold.
Go—the good Christian waits—conduct him to her;
Zara expects thee—What she wills, obey.
[*Exit Osman.*

Oras. Ho! Christian! enter—wait a moment here.

Enter NERESTAN.

Zara will soon approach—I go to find her.
[*Exit Oras.*

Ner. In what a state, in what a place, I leave her?
Oh, faith! oh, father! oh, my poor lost sister!
She's here———

Enter ZARA.

Thank Heaven, it is not, then, unlawful
To see you, yet once more, my lovely sister!
Not all so happy!——We, who met but now,
Shall never meet again——for Lusignan——
We shall be orphans still, and want a father.

Zar. Forbid it Heaven!

Ner. His last sad hour's at hand———
That flow of joy, which followed our discovery,
Too strong and sudden for his age's weakness,
Wasting his spirits, dried the source of life,
And nature yields him up to time's demand.
Shall he not die in peace?—Oh! let no doubt
Disturb his parting moments with distrust;
Let me, when I return to close his eyes,
Compose his mind's impatience too, and tell him,
You are confirmed a Christian!

Zar. Oh! may his soul enjoy, in earth and heaven,
Eternal rest! nor let one thought, one sigh,
One bold complaint of mine, recall his cares!
But you have injured me, who still can doubt.—
What! am I not your sister? and shall you
Refuse me credit? You suppose me light;
You, who should judge my honour by your own,
Shall you distrust a truth I dared avow,
And stamp apostate on a sister's heart!

Ner. Ah! do not misconceive me!—if I erred,
Affection, not distrust, misled my fear;
Your will may be a Christian, yet not you;
There is a sacred mark—a sign of faith,
A pledge of promise, that must firm your claim,
Wash you from guilt, and open Heaven before you.
Swear, swear by all the woes we all have borne,
By all the martyred saints, who call you daughter,
That you consent, this day, to seal our faith,
By that mysterious rite which waits your call.

Zar. I swear by Heaven, and all its holy host,
Its saints, its martyrs, its attesting angels,
And the dread presence of its living author,
To have no faith but yours;—to die a Christian!
Now, tell me what this mystic faith requires.

Ner. To hate the happiness of Osman's throne,
And love that God, who, through his maze of woes,
Has brought us all, unhoping, thus together.
For me—I am a soldier, uninstructed,
Nor daring to instruct, though strong in faith:
But I will bring the ambassador of Heaven,
To clear your views, and lift you to your God!
Be it your task to gain admission for him.——
But where? for whom?—Oh! thou immortal Power!
Whence can we hope it, in this cursed seraglio?
Who is this slave of Osman? Yes, this slave!
Does she not boast the blood of twenty kings?
Is not her race the same with that of Lewis?
Is she not Lusignan's unhappy daughter?
A Christian, and my sister?—yet a slave!
A willing slave!—I dare not speak more plainly.

Zar. Cruel! go on—Alas! you do not know me!
At once, a stranger to my secret fate,
My pains, my fears, my wishes, and my power:
I am—I will be Christian—will receive
This holy priest, with his mysterious blessing;
I will not do, nor suffer, aught unworthy
Myself, my father, or my father's race.
But, tell me——nor be tender on this point——
What punishment your Christian laws decree
For an unhappy wretch, who, to herself
Unknown, and all abandoned by the world,
Lost and enslaved, has, in her sovereign master,
Found a protector, generous as great,
Has touched his heart, and given him all her own?

Ner. The punishment of such a slave should be
Death in this world—and pain in that to come.

Zar. I am that slave—strike here—and save my shame!

Ner. Destruction to my hopes! Can it be you?

Zar. It is—Adored by Osman, I adore him:
This hour the nuptial rites will make us one.

Ner. What! marry Osman!—Let the world grow dark,
That the extinguished sun may hide thy shame!
Could it be thus, it were no crime to kill thee!

Zar. Strike, strike—I love him—yes, by Heaven I love him.

Ner. Death is thy due—but not thy due from me:
Yet, were the honour of our house no bar——
My father's fame, and the too gentle laws
Of that religion which thou hast disgraced——
Did not the God thou quittest hold back my arm——
Not there—I could not there—but, by my soul,
I would rush, desperate, to the sultan's breast,
And plunge my sword in his proud heart, who damns thee!
Oh! shame! shame! shame! at such a time as this!
When Lewis! that awakener of the world,
Beneath the lifted cross makes Egypt pale,

And draws the sword of Heaven to spread our faith,
Now to submit to see my sister doomed
A bosom slave to him, whose tyrant heart
But measures glory by the Christian's woe!
Yes—I will dare acquaint our father with it;
Departing Lusignan may live so long,
As just to hear thy shame, and die to escape it.
Zar. Stay—my too angry brother—stay—perhaps,
Zara has resolution great as thine:
'Tis cruel—and unkind.—Thy words are crimes;
My weakness but misfortune. Dost thou suffer?
I suffer more;—Oh! would to Heaven this blood
Of twenty boasted kings would stop at once,
And stagnate in my heart!—It then no more
Would rush, in boiling fevers, through my veins,
And every trembling drop be filled with Osman.
How has he loved me! how has he obliged me!
I owe thee to him! What has he not done,
To justify his boundless power of charming?
For me, he softens the severe decrees
Of his own faith;—and is it just that mine
Should bid me hate him, but because he loves me?
No——I will be a Christian——but preserve
My gratitude as sacred as my faith;
If I have death to fear for Osman's sake,
It must be from his coldness, not his love.
Ner. I must at once condemn and pity thee;
I cannot point thee out which way to go,
But Providence will lend its light to guide thee.
That sacred rite, which thou shalt now receive,
Will strengthen and support thy feeble heart,
To live an innocent, or die a martyr:
Here, then, begin performance of thy vow;
Here, in the trembling horrors of thy soul,
Promise thy king, thy father, and thy God,
Not to accomplish thy detested nuptials,
Till first the reverend priest has cleared your eyes,
Taught you to know, and given you claim to Heaven,
Promise me this———
Zar. So, bless me, Heaven! I do.——
Go—hasten the good priest, I will expect him;
But first return—cheer my expiring father,
Tell him I am, and will be, all he wishes me:
Tell him, to give him life 'twere joy to die.
Ner. I go—Farewell—farewell, unhappy sister!
[*Exit Nerestan.*
Zar. I am alone—and now be just, my heart!
And tell me, wilt thou dare betray thy God?
What am I? What am I about to be?
Daughter of Lusignan—or wife to Osman?
Am I a lover most, or most a Christian?
Would Selima were come! and yet 'tis just,
All friends should fly her who forsakes herself.
What shall I do?—What heart has strength to bear
These double weights of duty?—Help me, Heaven!
To thy hard laws I render up my soul:
But, oh! demand it back—for now 'tis Osman's.

Enter OSMAN.

Osm. Shine out, appear, be found, my lovely Zara!
Impatient eyes attend—the rites expect thee;
And my devoted heart no longer brooks
This distance from its softener!—all the lamps
Of nuptial love are lighted, and burn pure,
As if they drew their brightness from thy blushes:
The holy mosque is filled with fragrant fumes,
Which emulate the sweetness of thy breathing:
My prostrate people all confirm my choice,
And send their souls to Heaven in prayers for blessings.
Thy envious rivals, conscious of thy right,
Approve superior charms, and join to praise thee;
The throne, that waits thee, seems to shine more richly,
As all its gems, with animated lustre,
Feared to look dim beneath the eyes of Zara!
Come, my slow love! the ceremonies wait thee;
Come, and begin from this dear hour my triumph.
Zar. Oh, what a wretch am I! Oh, grief! Oh, love!
Osm. Come——come——
Zar. Where shall I hide my blushes?
Osm. Blushes—here, in my bosom, hide them.
Zar. My lord!
Osm. Nay, Zara—give me thy hand, and come——
Zar. Instruct me, Heaven!
What should I say—Alas! I cannot speak.
Osm. Away——this modest, sweet reluctant trifling
But doubles my desires, and thy own beauties.
Zar. Ah, me!
Osm. Nay—but thou shouldst not be too cruel.
Zar. I can no longer bear it—Oh, my lord—
Osm. Ha!—What?—whence?—how?———
Zar. My lord! my sovereign!
Heaven knows this marriage would have been a bliss
Above my humble hopes!—yet, witness love!
Not from the grandeur of your throne, that bliss,
But from the pride of calling Osman mine.
Would you had been no emperor! and I
Possessed of power and charms deserving you!
That, slighting Asia's thrones, I might alone
Have left a proffered world, to follow you
Through deserts, uninhabited by men,
And blessed with ample room for peace and love:
But, as it is——these Christians——
Osm. Christians! What!
How start two images into thy thoughts,
So distant——as the Christians and my love!
Zar. That good old Christian, reverend Lusignan,
Now dying, ends his life and woes together.
Osm. Well! let him die—What has thy heart to feel,

Thus pressing, and thus tender, from the death
Of an old wretched Christian?—Thank our prophet,
Thou art no Christian!—Educated here,
Thy happy youth was taught our better faith:
Sweet as thy pity shines, 'tis now mis-timed.
What! though an aged sufferer dies unhappy,
Why should his foreign fate disturb our joys?
Zar. Sir, if you love me, and would have me think
That I am truly dear——
Osm. Heaven! if I love!
Zar. Permit me——
Osm. What?
Zar. To desire——
Osm. Speak out.
Zar. The nuptial rites
May be deferred till——
Osm. What!—Is that the voice
Of Zara?
Zar. Oh, I cannot bear his frown!
Osm. Of Zara!
Zar. It is dreadful to my heart,
To give you but a seeming cause for anger;
Pardon my grief—Alas! I cannot bear it;
There is a painful terror in your eye,
That pierces to my soul—hid from your sight,
I go to make a moment's truce with tears,
And gather force to speak of my despair.
[*Exit disordered.*
Osm. I stand immoveable, like senseless marble;
Horror had frozen my suspended tongue;
And an astonished silence robbed my will
Of power to tell her that she shocked my soul!
Spoke she to me?—Sure I misunderstood her!
Could it be me she left?—What have I seen!

Enter Orasmin.

Orasmin, what a change is here!—She's gone,
And I permitted it, I know not how.
Oras. Perhaps you but accuse the charming fault
Of innocence, too modest oft in love.
Osm. But why, and whence those tears?—those looks? that flight?
That grief, so strongly stamped on every feature?
If it has been that Frenchman!—What a thought!
How low, how horrid a suspicion that!
The dreadful flash at once gives light and kills me;
My too bold confidence repelled my caution—
An infidel! a slave!—a heart like mine
Reduced to suffer from so vile a rival!
But tell me, didst thou mark them at their parting?
Didst thou observe the language of their eyes?
Hide nothing from me——Is my love betrayed?
Tell me my whole disgrace: nay, if thou trembl'est,
I hear thy pity speak, though thou art silent.
Oras. I tremble at the pangs I see you suffer.
Let not your angry apprehension urge
Your faithful slave to irritate your anguish;
I did, 'tis true, observe some parting tears;
But they were tears of charity and grief:
I cannot think there was a cause deserving
This agony of passion——
Osm. Why no—I thank thee——
Orasmin, thou art wise! It could not be
That I should stand exposed to such an insult.
Thou know'st, had Zara meant me the offence,
She wants not wisdom to have hid it better:
How rightly didst thou judge!—Zara shall know it,
And thank thy honest service—After all,
Might she not have some cause for tears, which I
Claim no concern in—but the grief it gives her?
What an unlikely fear—from a poor slave,
Who goes to-morrow, and, no doubt, who wishes,
Nay, who resolves, to see these climes no more.
Oras. Why did you, sir, against our country's custom,
Indulge him with a second leave to come?
He said, he should return once more to see her.
Osm. Return! the traitor! he return!—Dares he
Presume to press a second interview?
Would he be seen again?—He shall be seen;
But dead.—I'll punish the audacious slave,
To teach the faithless fair to feel my anger.
Be still, my transports; violence is blind:
I know my heart at once is fierce and weak;
I feel that I descend below myself;
Zara can never justly be suspected;
Her sweetness was not formed to cover treason:
Yet, Osman must not stoop to woman's follies;
Their tears, complaints, regrets, and reconcilements,
With all their light, capricious roll of changes,
Are arts too vulgar to be tried on me.
It would become me better to resume
The empire of my will. Rather than fall
Beneath myself, I must, how dear soe'er
It costs me, rise—till I look down on Zara!——
Away—but mark me—these seraglio doors,
Against all Christians be they henceforth shut,
Close as the dark retreats of silent death.
[*Exit Orasmin.*
What have I done, just Heaven! thy rage to move,
That thou shouldst sink me down, so low to love?
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

ZARA, SELIMA.

Sel. Ah, madam! how at once I grieve your fate,
And how admire your virtue!—Heaven permits,
And Heaven will give you strength, to bear misfortune;
To break these chains, so strong, and yet so dear.
Zar. Oh, that I could support the fatal struggle!
Sel. The Eternal aids your weakness, sees your will,
Directs your purpose, and rewards your sorrows.
Zar. Never had wretch more cause to hope he does.
Sel. What! though you here no more behold your father!
There is a Father to be found above,
Who can restore that father to his daughter.
Zar. But I have planted pain in Osman's bosom;
He loves me, even to death! and I reward him
With anguish and despair.—How base! how cruel!
But I deserved him not; I should have been
Too happy, and the hand of Heaven repelled me.
Sel. What! will you then regret the glorious loss,
And hazard thus a victory bravely won?
Zar. Inhuman victory!—thou dost not know
This love so powerful, this sole joy of life,
This first, best hope of earthly happiness,
Is yet less powerful in my heart than Heaven!
To him who made that heart I offer it;
There, there, I sacrifice my bleeding passion;
I pour before him every guilty tear;
I beg him to efface the fond impression,
And fill with his own image all my soul:
But, while I weep and sigh, repent and pray,
Remembrance brings the object of my love,
And every light illusion floats before him.
I see, I hear him, and again he charms!
Fills my glad soul, and shines 'twixt me and Heaven!
Oh, all ye royal ancestors! Oh, father!
Mother! You Christians, and the Christians' God!
You who deprive me of this generous lover!
If you permit me not to live for him,
Let me not live at all, and I am blessed:
Let me die innocent; let his dear hand
Close the sad eyes of her he stooped to love,
And I acquit my fate, and ask no more.
But he forgives me not—regardless now,
Whether or how I live, or when I die.
He quits me, scorns me—and I yet live on,
And talk of death as distant!——
Sel. Ah! despair not;
Trust your eternal helper, and be happy.
Zar. Why—what has Osman done, that he too should not?
Has Heaven so nobly formed his heart to hate it?
Generous and just, beneficent and brave,
Were he but Christian—What can man be more?
I wish, methinks, this reverend priest were come,
To free me from these doubts, which shake my soul:
Yet know not why I should not dare to hope,
That Heaven, whose mercy all confess and feel,
Will pardon and approve the alliance wished:
Perhaps it seats me on the throne of Syria,
To tax my power for these good Christians' comfort.
Thou know'st the mighty Saladine, who first
Conquered this empire from my father's race,
Who, like my Osman, charmed the admiring world,
Drew breath, though Syrian, from a Christian mother.
Sel. What mean you, madam! Ah! you do not see—
Zar. Yes, yes—I see it all; I am not blind:
I see my country and my race condemn me;
I see, that spite of all, I still love Osman.
What if I now go throw me at his feet,
And tell him there sincerely what I am?
Sel. Consider—that might cost your brother's life,
Expose the Christians, and betray you all.
Zar. You do not know the noble heart of Osman.
Sel. I know him the protector of a faith,
Sworn enemy to ours—The more he loves,
The less he will permit you to profess
Opinions which he hates: to-night the priest,
In private introduced, attends you here;
You promised him admission——
Zar. Would I had not!
I promised, too, to keep this fatal secret;
My father's urged command required it of me;
I must obey, all dangerous as it is;
Compelled to silence, Osman is enraged,
Suspicion follows, and I lose his love.

Enter OSMAN.

Osm. Madam! there was a time when my charmed heart
Made it a virtue to be lost in love;
When, without blushing, I indulged my flame,
And every day still made you dearer to me.
You taught me, madam, to believe my love
Rewarded and returned—nor was that hope,
Methinks, too bold for reason. Emperors,
Who chuse to sigh devoted at the feet
Of beauties, whom the world conceive their slaves,
Have fortune's claim, at least, to sure success:

But 'twere prophane to think of power in love.
Dear as my passion makes you, I decline
Possession of her charms, whose heart's another's.
You will not find me a weak, jealous lover,
By coarse reproaches, giving pain to you,
And shaming my own greatness. Wounded deeply,
Yet shunning and disdaining low complaint,
I come———to tell you———
Zar. Give my trembling heart
A moment's respite——
Osm. That unwilling coldness
Is the just prize of your capricious lightness;
Your ready arts may spare the fruitless pains
Of colouring deceit with fair pretences;
I would not wish to hear your slight excuses;
I cherish ignorance, to save my blushes.
Osman in every trial shall remember
That he is emperor. Whate'er I suffer,
'Tis due to honour that I give up you,
And to my injured bosom take despair,
Rather than shamefully possess you sighing,
Convinced those sighs were never meant for me—
Go, madam—you are free—from Osman's power—
Expect no wrongs, but see his face no more.
Zar. At last, 'tis come—the feared, the murdering moment
Is come—and I am cursed by earth and heaven!
[*Throws herself on the ground.*
If it is true that I am loved no more——
If you——
Osm. It is too true, my fame requires it;
It is too true that I unwilling leave you:
That I at once renounce you and adore——
Zara!——you weep!
Zar. If I am doomed to lose you,
If I must wander o'er an empty world,
Unloving and unloved——Oh! yet, do justice
To the afflicted——do not wrong me doubly:
Punish me, if it is needful to your peace,
But say not, I deserved it—This, at least,
Believe——for not the greatness of your soul
Is truth more pure and sacred—no regret
Can touch my bleeding heart, for I have lost
The rank of her you raise to share your throne.
I know I never ought to have been there;
My fate and my defects require I lose you.
But ah! my heart was never known to Osman.
May Heaven, that punishes, for ever hate me,
If I regret the loss of aught but you.
Osm. Rise—rise, this means not love?
Zar. Strike———Strike me, Heaven!
Osm. What! is it love to force yourself to wound
The heart you wish to gladden? But I find
Lovers least know themselves; for I believed,
That I had taken back the power I gave you;
Yet see! you did but weep, and have resumed me!
Proud as I am———I must confess, one wish
Evades my power———the blessing to forget you.
Zara—thy tears were formed to teach disdain,
That softness can disarm it.———'Tis decreed,
I must for ever love—but from what cause,
If thy consenting heart partakes my fires,
Art thou reluctant to a blessing meant me?
Speak! Is it levity———or, is it fear?
Fear of a power that, but for blessing thee,
Had, without joy, been painful. Is it artifice?
Oh! spare the needless pains———Art was not made
For Zara.———Art, however innocent,
Looks like deceiving———I abhorred it ever.
Zar. Alas! I have no art; not even enough
To hide this love, and this distress you give me.
Osm. New riddles! Speak with plainness to my soul;
What canst thou mean?
Zar. I have no power to speak it.
Osm. It it some secret dangerous to my state?
Is it some Christian plot grown ripe against me?
Zar. Lives there a wretch so vile as to betray you!
Osman is blessed beyond the reach of fear:
Fears and misfortunes threaten only Zara.
Osm. Why threaten Zara?
Zar. Permit me, at your feet,
Thus trembling, to beseech a favour from you.
Osm. A favour! Oh, you guide the will of Osman.
Zar. Ah! would to Heaven our duties were united,
Firm as our thoughts and wishes! But this day,
But this one sad, unhappy day, permit me,
Alone, and far divided from your eye,
To cover my distress, lest you, too tender,
Should see and share it with me—from to-morrow,
I will not have a thought concealed from you.
Osm. What strange disquiet, from what stranger cause!
Zar. If I am really blessed with Osman's love,
He will not then refuse this humble prayer.
Osm. If it must be, it must.—Be pleased, my will
Takes purpose from your wishes; and consent
Depends not on my choice, but your decree:
Go——but remember how he loves, who thus
Finds a delight in pain, because you give it.
Zar. It gives me more than pain to make you feel it.
Osm. And——can you, Zara, leave me?
Zar. Alas, my lord! [*Exit Zara.*
Osm. [*Alone.*] It should be yet, methinks, too soon to fly me!
Too soon, as yet, to wrong my easy faith.
The more I think, the less I can conceive,
What hidden cause should raise such strange despair!
Now, when her hopes have wings, and every wish
Is courted to be lively! When I love,

And joy and empire press her to their bosom;
When not alone beloved, but even a lover:
Professing and accepting; blessed and blessing;
To see her eyes, through tears, shine mystic love!
'Tis madness! and I were unworthy power,
To suffer longer the capricious insult!
Yet, was I blameless? No—I was too rash;
I have felt jealousy, and spoke it to her;
I have distrusted her—and still she loves:
Generous atonement that! and 'tis my duty
To expiate, by a length of soft indulgence,
The transports of a rage, which still was love.
Henceforth, I never will suspect her false;
Nature's plain power of charming dwells about her,
And innocence gives force to every word.
I owe full confidence to all she looks,
For in her eyes shines truth, and every beam
Shoots confirmation round her. I remarked,
Even while she wept, her soul a thousand times
Sprung to her lips, and longed to leap to mine,
With honest, ardent utterance of her love.
Who can possess a heart so low, so base,
To look such tenderness, and yet have none?

Enter MELIDOR *with* ORASMIN.

Mel. This letter, great disposer of the world!
Addressed to Zara, and in private brought,
Your faithful guards this moment intercepted,
And humbly offer to your sovereign eye.
Osm. Come nearer, give it me.—To Zara!—Rise.
Bring it with speed——Shame on your flattering distance——
[*Advancing, and snatching the letter.*
Be honest——and approach me like a subject,
Who serves the prince, yet not forgets the man.
Mel. One of your Christian slaves, whom late your bounty
Released from bondage, sought with heedful guile,
Unnoticed to deliver it.———Discovered,
He waits, in chains, his doom from your decree.
Osm. Leave me! I tremble, as if something fatal
Were meant me from this letter——should I read it?
Oras. Who knows but it contains some happy truth,
That may remove all doubts, and calm your heart?
Osm. Be it as 'twill—it shall be read—my hands
Have apprehension that out-reaches mine!
Why should they tremble thus?— 'tis done—and now,
[*Opens the letter.*
Fate, be thy call obeyed——Orasmin, mark——

'There is a secret passage toward the mosque;
'That way you might escape; and unperceived,
'Fly your observers, and fulfil our hope;
'Despise the danger, and depend on me,
'Who wait you, but to die if you deceive.

Hell! tortures! death! and woman!—What, Orasmin!
Are we awake? Heardst thou? Can this be Zara?
Oras. Would I had lost all sense—for what I heard
Has covered my afflicted heart with horror.
Osm. Thou seest how I am treated!
Oras. Monstrous treason!
To an affront like this you cannot——must not
Remain insensible——You, who but now,
From the most slight suspicion, felt such pain,
Must, in the horror of so black a guilt,
Find an effectual cure, and banish love.
Osm. Seek her this instant—go, Orasmin, fly
Shew her this letter—bid her read and tremble:
Then, in the rising horrors of her guilt,
Stab her unfaithful breast, and let her die.
Say, while thou strikest———Stay, stay, return and pity me;
I will think first a moment—Let that Christian
Be strait confronted with her—Stay—I will,
I will—I know not what———Would I were dead!
Would I had died, unconscious of this shame!
Oras. Never did prince receive so bold a wrong.
Osm. See here detected this infernal secret!
This fountain of her tears, which my weak heart
Mistook for marks of tenderness and pain!
Why! what a reach has woman to deceive!
Under how fine a veil of grief and fear
Did she propose retirement 'till to-morrow!
And I, blind dotard! gave the fool's consent,
Soothed her, and suffered her to go!——She parted,
Dissolved in tears; and parted to betray me!
Oras. Reflection serves but to confirm her guilt.
At length resume yourself; awaken thought;
Assert your greatness; and resolve like Osman.
Osm. Nerestan, too—Was this the boasted honour
Of that proud Christian, whom Jerusalem
Grew loud in praising! whose half-envied virtue
I wondered at myself; and felt disdain
To be but equal to a Christian's greatness!
And does he thank me thus? base infidel!
Honest, pretending, pious, praying villain?
Yet Zara is a thousand times more base,
More hypocrite, than he. A slave! a wretch!
So low, so lost, that even the vilest labours,
In which he lay condemned, could never sink him
Beneath his native infamy——Did she not know
What I have done, what suffered—for her sake?
Oras. Could you, my gracious lord, forgive my zeal,
You would———
Osm. I know it—thou art right—I'll see her—
I'll tax her in thy presence;—I'll upbraid her—
I'll let her learn—Go—find, and bring her to me.
Oras. Alas, my lord! disordered as you are,
What can you wish to say?

Osm. I know not, now—
But I resolve to see her—lest she think
Her falsehood has, perhaps, the power to grieve me.
Oras. Believe me, sir, your threatenings, your complaints,
What will they all produce, but Zara's tears
To quench this fancied anger! Your lost heart,
Seduced against itself, will search but reasons
To justify the guilt, which gives it pain:
Rather conceal from Zara this discovery;
And let some trusty slave convey the letter,
Reclosed, to her own hand—then shall you learn,
Spite of her frauds, disguise, and artifice,
The firmness, or abasement of her soul.
Osm. Thy counsel charms me! We'll about it now.
'Twill be some recompence, at least, to see
Her blushes when detected.
Oras. Oh, my lord!
I doubt you in the trial! for your heart——
Osm. Distrust me not—my love, indeed, is weak,
But honour and disdain more strong than Zara.
Here, take this fatal letter—chuse a slave,
Whom yet she never saw, and who retains
His tried fidelity—Dispatch—begone——
[*Exit Orasmin.*
Now, whither shall I turn my eyes and steps,
The surest way to shun her: and give time
For this discovering trial?—Heaven! she's here!

Enter ZARA.

So, Madam! fortune will befriend my cause,
And free me from your fetters.—You are met
Most aptly, to dispel a new-risen doubt,
That claims the finest of your arts to gloss it.
Unhappy each by other, it is time
To end our mutual pain, that both may rest:
You want not generosity, but love;
My pride forgotten, my obtruded throne,
My favours, cares, respect, and tenderness,
Touching your gratitude, provoked regard;
'Till, by a length of benefits besieged,
Your heart submitted, and you thought 'twas love:
But you deceived yourself and injured me.
There is, I'm told, an object more deserving
Your love than Osman——I would know his name:
Be just, nor trifle with my anger: tell me
Now, while expiring pity struggles faint,
While I have yet, perhaps, the power to pardon:
Give up the bold invader of my claim,
And let him die to save thee. Thou art known;
Think and resolve—While I yet speak, renounce him;
While yet the thunder rolls suspended, stay it;
Let thy voice charm me, and recall my soul,
That turns averse, and dwells no more on Zara.
Zar. Can it be Osman speaks, and speaks to Zara?
Learn, cruel! learn, that this afflicted heart,
This heart, which Heaven delights to prove by tortures,
Did it not love, has pride and power to shun you.
Alas! you will not know me! what have I
To fear, but that unhappy love you question?
That love, which only could outweigh the shame
I feel, while I descend to weep my wrongs.
I know not whether Heaven, that frowns upon me,
Has destined my unhappy days for yours;
But, be my fate or blessed or cursed, I swear
By honour, dearer even than life or love,
Could Zara be but mistress of herself,
She would, with cold regard, look down on kings,
And, you alone excepted, fly them all.
Would you learn more, and open all my heart?
Know, then, that spite of this renewed injustice,
I do not—cannot wish to love you less:
That, long before you looked so low as Zara,
She gave her heart to Osman; yours, before
Your benefits had bought her, or your eye
Had thrown distinction round her; never had,
Nor ever will acknowledge other lover:——
And to this sacred truth, attesting Heaven,
I call thy dreadful notice! If my heart
Deserves reproach, 'tis for, but not from, Osman.
Osm. What! does she yet presume to swear sincerity!
Oh, boldness of unblushing perjury!
Had I not seen, had I not read such proof,
Of her light falsehood as extinguished doubt,
I could not be a man, and not believe her.
Zar. Alas, my lord! what cruel fears have seized you?
What harsh, mysterious words were those I heard?
Osm. What fears should Osman feel, since Zara loves him?
Zar. I cannot live and answer to your voice,
In that reproachful tone; your angry eye
Trembles with fury while you talk of love.
Osm. Since Zara loves him!
Zar. Is it possible
Osman should disbelieve it?—Again, again
Your late-repented violence returns——
Alas! what killing frowns you dart against me!
Can it be kind? Can it be just to doubt me?
Osm. No! I can doubt no longer—You may retire.
[*Exit Zara.*

Re-enter ORASMIN.

Orasmin, she's perfidious, even beyond
Her sex's undiscovered power of seeming;
She's at the topmost point of shameless artifice;
An empress at deceiving! Soft and easy,
Destroying like a plague, in calm tranquillity:
She's innocent, she swears—so is the fire;
It shines in harmless distance, bright and pleasing,
Consuming nothing till it first embraces.
Say, hast thou chosen a slave?—Is he instructed?
Haste to detect her vileness and my wrongs.

Oras. Punctual I have obeyed your whole command:
But have you armed, my lord, your injured heart,
With coldness and indifference? Can you hear,
All painless and unmoved, the false one's shame?
Osm. Orasmin, I adore her more than ever.
Oras. My lord! my emperor! forbid it, Heaven!
Osm. I have discerned a gleam of distant hope;
This hateful Christian, the light growth of France,
Proud, young, vain, amorous, conceited, rash,
Has misconceived some charitable glance,
And judged it love in Zara: he alone,
Then, has offended me. Is it her fault,
If those she charms are indiscreet and daring?
Zara, perhaps, expected not this letter;
And I, with rashness groundless as its writer's,
Took fire at my own fancy, and have wronged her.
Now hear me with attention—Soon as night
Has thrown her welcome shadows o'er the palace;
When this Nerestan, this ungrateful Christian,
Shall lurk in expectation near our walls,
Be watchful that our guards surprise and seize him;
Then, bound in fetters, and o'erwhelmed with shame,
Conduct the daring traitor to my presence:—
But, above all, be sure you hurt not Zara;
Mindful to what supreme excess I love.
[*Exit Orasmin.*
On this last trial all my hopes depend;
Prophet, for once thy kind assistance lend,
Dispel the doubts that rack my anxious breast,
If Zara's innocent, thy Osman's blest.
[*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

ZARA *and* SELIMA.

Zar. SOOTHE me no longer with this vain desire;
To a recluse like me, who dares henceforth
Presume admission!——the seraglio's shut——
Barred and impassable——as death to time!
My brother ne'er must hope to see me more:—
How now! what unknown slave accosts us here?

Enter MELIDOR.

Mel. This letter, trusted to my hands, receive,
In secret witness I am wholly yours.
[*Zara reads the letter.*
Sel. [*Aside.*] Thou everlasting ruler of the world!
Shed thy wished mercy on our hopeless tears;
Redeem us from the hands of hated infidels,
And save my princess from the breast of Osman.
Zar. I wish, my friend, the comfort of your counsel.
Sel. Retire—you shall be called—wait near—
Go, leave us. [*Exit Melidor.*
Zar. Read this, and tell me what I ought to answer:
For I would gladly hear my brother's voice.
Sel. Say rather you would hear the voice of Heaven.
'Tis not your brother calls you, but your God.
Zar. I know it, nor resist his awful will;
Thou knowest that I have bound my soul by oath;
But can I—ought I—to engage myself,
My brother, and the Christians, in this danger?
Sel. 'Tis not their danger that alarms your fears;
Your love speaks loudest to your shrinking soul;
I know your heart of strength to hazard all,
But it has let in traitors, who surrender,
On poor pretence of safety:—Learn at least,
To understand the weakness that deceives you:
You tremble to offend your haughty lover,
Whom wrongs and outrage but endear the more;
Yes—you are blind to Osman's cruel nature,
That Tartar's fierceness, that obscures his bounties;
This tyger, savage in his tenderness,
Courts with contempt, and threatens amidst softness;
Yet, cannot your neglected heart efface
His fated, fixed impression!
Zar. What reproach
Can I with justice make him? I, indeed,
Have given him cause to hate me!
Was not his throne, was not his temple ready?
Did he not court his slave to be a queen,
And have I not declined it?——I who ought
To tremble, conscious of affronted power!
Have not I triumphed o'er his pride and love?
Seen him submit his own high will to mine,
And sacrifice his wishes to my weakness?
Sel. Talk we no more of this unhappy passion:
What resolution will your virtue take?
Zar. All things combine to sink me to despair;
From the seraglio death alone will free me.
I long to see the Christians' happy climes;
Yet in the moment, while I form that prayer,
I sigh a secret wish to languish here.
How sad a state is mine! my restless soul
All ignorant what to do, or what to wish,
My only perfect sense is that of pain.
Oh, guardian Heaven! protect my brother's life,
For I will meet him, and fulfil his prayer:
Then, when from Solyma's unfriendly walls,
His absence shall unbind his sister's tongue,
Osman shall learn the secret of my birth,
My faith unshaken, and my deathless love;
He will approve my choice, and pity me.
I'll send my brother word he may expect me.
Call in the faithful slave——God of my fathers!
[*Exit Selima.*
Let thy hand save me, and thy will direct!

Enter SELIMA *and* MELIDOR.

Go——tell the Christian who intrusted thee,
That Zara's heart is fixed, nor shrinks at danger;
And that my faithful friend will, at the hour,
Expect, and introduce him to his wish.
Away——the sultan comes; he must not find us.
[*Exeunt Zara and Selima.*

Enter OSMAN *and* ORASMIN.

Osm. Swifter, ye hours, move on; my fury glows
Impatient, and would push the wheels of time.
How now! What message dost thou bring? Speak boldly—
What answer gave she to the letter sent her?
Mel. She blushed and trembled, and grew pale, and paused.
Then blushed, and read it; and again grew pale;
And wept, and smiled, and doubted, and resolved:
For after all this race of varied passions,
When she had sent me out, and called me back,
'Tell him,' she cried, 'who has intrusted thee,
'That Zara's heart is fixed, nor shrinks at danger;
'And that my faithful friend will, at the hour,
'Expect, and introduce him to his wish.'
Osm. Enough—begone—I have no ear for more.— [*To the slave.*
Leave me, thou too, Orasmin.—Leave me, life,
[*To Orasmin.*
For every mortal aspect moves my hate:
Leave me to my distraction—I grow mad,
And cannot bear the visage of a friend.
Leave me to rage, despair, and shame, and wrongs!
Leave me to seek myself—and shun mankind.
[*Exit Orasmin.*
Who am I?—Heaven! Who am I? What resolve I?
Zara! Nerestan! sound these words like names
Decreed to join?—Why pause I?—Perish Zara—
Would I could tear her image from my heart!—
'Twere happier not to live at all, than live
Her scorn, the sport of an ungrateful false one!
And sink the sovereign in a woman's property.

Re-enter ORASMIN.

Orasmin!—Friend! return, I cannot bear
This absence from thy reason: 'twas unkind,
'Twas cruel to obey me, thus distressed,
And wanting power to think, when I had lost thee.
How goes the hour? Has he appeared, this rival?
Perish the shameful sound—This villain Christian!
Has he appeared below?
Oras. Silent and dark,
The unbreathing world is hushed, as if it heard,
And listened to your sorrows.
Osm. Oh, treacherous night!
Thou lendst thy ready veil to every treason,
And teeming mischiefs thrive beneath thy shade.
Orasmin, prophet, reason, truth, and love!
After such length of benefits, to wrong me!
How have I over-rated, how mistaken,
The merit of her beauty!—Did I not
Forget I was a monarch? Did I remember
That Zara was a slave?—I gave up all;
Gave up tranquillity, distinction, pride,
And fell the shameful victim of my love!
Oras. Sir, sovereign, sultan, my imperial master!
Reflect on your own greatness,
The distant provocation.
Osm. Hark! Heard'st thou nothing?
Oras. My lord!
Osm. A voice, like dying groans!
Oras. I listen, but can hear nothing.
Osm. Again!—look out—he comes——
Oras. Nor tread of mortal foot—nor voice I hear:
The still seraglio lies, profoundly plunged
In death-like silence. Nothing stirs.—The air
Is soft, as infant sleep; no breathing wing
Steals through the shadows, to awaken night.
Osm. Horrors a thousand times more dark than these,
Benight my suffering soul—Thou dost not know
To what excess of tenderness I loved her;
I knew no happiness, but what she gave me,
Nor could have felt a misery but for her!
Pity this weakness—mine are tears, Orasmin,
That fall not oft, nor lightly.——
Oras. Tears!—Oh, Heaven!
Osm. The first which ever yet unmanned my eyes!
Oh! pity Zara—pity me—Orasmin,
These but forerun the tears of destined blood.
Oras. Oh, my unhappy lord!—I tremble for you—
Osm. Do—tremble at my sufferings, at my love;
At my revenge too, tremble—for 'tis due,
And will not be deluded.
Oras. Hark! I hear
The steps of men, along the neighbouring wall!
Osm. Fly—seize him—'tis Nerestan! Wait no chains,
But drag him down to my impatient eye.
[*Exit Orasmin.*

Enter ZARA *and* SELIMA, *in the dark.*

Zara. Where art thou, Selima? Give me thy hand.
It is so dark, I tremble as I step,
With fears and startings, never felt till now!
Osm. Damnation! 'tis her voice! the well-known sound,
That has so often charmed me into baseness!
Oh, the perfidious hypocrite!—she goes
To meet the inviting infidel!——now, now,
[*Drawing a dagger.*
Revenge, stand firm, and intercept his wishes;—

Revenge! On whom?—No matter—Earth and Heaven
Would blush, should I forbear: now—Zara, now!
[*Drops the dagger.*
I must not, cannot strike! the starting steel,
Unwilling, flies my hand, and shuns to wound her.
Zar. This is the private path—come nearer, lead me——
Are we not noticed, think'st thou?
Sel. Fear not, madam;
It cannot now be long, ere we shall meet him.
Osm. That word has given me back my ebbing rage— [*Recovers the dagger.*
Zar. I walk in terror, and my heart forebodes.
Who's there?—Nerestan! Is it you?—O welcome—
Osm. [*Stabbing her.*] This to thy heart—— 'Tis not the traitor meets thee,
'Tis the betrayed—who writes it in thy blood.
Zar. Oh, gracious Heaven! receive my parting soul,
And take thy trembling servant to thy mercy—
[*Dies.*
Osm. Soul!—then revenge has reached thee—I will now
Haste from this fatal place—I cannot leave her!
Whom did I strike? Was this the act of love?
Swallow me, earth!—She's silent—Zara's dead!
And should I live to see returning day,
'Twill shew me but her blood!—shew me left joyless,
In a wide, empty world, with nothing round me,
But penitence and pain—And yet 'twas just:—
Hark!——Destiny has sent her lover to me,
To fill my vengeance, and restore my joy.

Enter ORASMIN *with* NERESTAN.

Approach, thou wretch! thou more than cursed! come near——
Thou, who, in gratitude for freedom gained,
Hast given me miseries beyond thy own!
Thou heart of hero with a traitor's soul!
Go—reap thy due reward! prepare to suffer,
Whate'er inventive malice can inflict,
To make thee feel thy death, and perish slow.
Are my commands obeyed?
Oras. All is prepared.
Osm. Thy wanton eyes look round, in search of her,
Whose love, descending to a slave like thee,
From my dishonoured hand received her doom.
See, where she lies!
Ner. Oh fatal, rash mistake!
Osm. Dost thou behold her, slave?
Ner. Unhappy sister!
Osm. Sister!——Didst thou say sister? If thou didst,
Bless me with deafness, Heaven!
Ner. Tyrant! I did———
She was my sister——All that now is left thee,
Dispatch—From my distracted heart drain next
The remnant of the royal Christian blood:
Old Lusignan, expiring in my arms,
Sent his too wretched son, with his last blessing,
To his now murdered daughter!——
Would I had seen the bleeding innocent!
I would have lived to speak to her in death;
Would have awakened, in her languid heart,
A livelier sense of her abandoned God:
That God, who, left by her, forsook her too,
And gave the poor lost sufferer to thy rage.
Osm. Thy sister!—Lusignan her father!—Selima!
Can this be true?—and have I wronged thee, Zara?
Sel. Thy love was all the cloud 'twixt her and Heaven!
Osm. Be dumb——for thou art base, to add distraction
To my already more than bleeding heart.
And was thy love sincere?—What then remains?
Ner. Why should a tyrant hesitate on murder?
There now remains but mine, of all the blood,
Which, through thy father's cruel reign and thine,
Has never ceased to stream on Syria's sands.
Restore a wretch to his unhappy race;
Nor hope that torments, after such a scene,
Can force one feeble groan to feast thy anger.
I waste my fruitless words in empty air;
The tyrant, o'er the bleeding wound he made,
Hangs his unmoving eye, and heeds not me.
Osm. Oh Zara!———
Oras. Alas! my lord, return—whither would grief
Transport your generous heart?——This Christian dog——
Osm. Take off his fetters, and observe my will:
To him, and all his friends, give instant liberty:
Pour a profusion of the richest gifts
On these unhappy Christians; and, when heaped
With varied benefits, and charged with riches,
Give them safe conduct to the nearest port.
Oras. But, sir———
Osm. Reply not, but obey.———
Fly—nor dispute thy master's last command,
Thy prince, who orders—and thy friend, who loves thee!
Go—lose no time—farewell—begone—and thou!
Unhappy warrior—yet less lost than I——
Haste from our bloody land—and to thy own
Convey this poor, pale object of my rage.
Thy king, and all his Christians, when they hear
Thy miseries, shall mourn them with their tears;
But, if thou tell'st them mine, and tell'st them truly,
They, who shall hate my crime, shall pity me.
Take, too, this poniard with thee, which my hand
Has stained with blood far dearer than my own;
Tell them—with this I murdered her I loved;
The noblest and most virtuous among women!

The soul of innocence, and pride of truth:
Tell them I laid my empire at her feet:
Tell them I plunged my dagger in her blood;
Tell them, I so adored—and thus revenged her.
[*Stabs himself.*
Reverence this hero—and conduct him safe. [*Dies.*

Ner. Direct me, great inspirer of the soul!
How should I act, how judge in this distress?
Amazing grandeur! and detested rage!
Even I, amidst my tears, admire this foe,
And mourn his death, who lived to give me woe.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

FATAL CURIOSITY.

BY

LILLO.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.	WOMEN.
Old Wilmot.	Agnes, *wife to Old Wilmot.*
Young Wilmot, *his son.*	Charlotte, *beloved of Young Wilmot.*
Eustace, *Young Wilmot's friend.*	Maria, *her attendant.*
Randal, *the faithful attendant of Old Wilmot.*	

Scene,—Penryn, in Cornwall.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Wilmot's House.*

Old Wilmot *alone.*

The day is far advanced. The chearful sun
Pursues with vigour his repeated course:
No labour lessens, nor no time decays
His strength, or splendour: evermore the same,
From age to age his influence sustains
Dependent worlds, bestows both life and motion
On the dull mass, that forms their dusky orbs,
Chears them with heat, and gilds them with his brightness.
Yet man, of jarring elements composed,
Who posts from change to change, from the first hour
Of his frail being to his dissolution,
Enjoys the sad prerogative above him,
To think and to be wretched!—What is life
To him, that's born to die!
Or, what the wisdom, whose perfection ends
In knowing, we know nothing!
Mere contradiction all! A tragic farce,
Tedious, though short, elaborate without art,
Ridiculously sad——

Enter Randal.

Where hast been, Randal?

Rand. Not out of Penryn, sir; but to the strand,
To hear what news from Falmouth, since the storm
Of wind last night.

O. Wilm. It was a dreadful one.

Rand. Some found it so. A noble ship from India,
Entering the harbour, run upon a rock,
And there was lost.

O. Wilm. What became of those on board her?

Rand. Some few are saved, but much the greater part,
'Tis thought, are perished.

O. Wilm. They are past the fear
Of future tempests, or a wreck on shore:
Those, who escaped, are still exposed to both.
Where is your mistress?

Rand. I saw her pass the High-street, towards the Minster.

O. Wilm. She is gone to visit Charlotte. She doth well.
In the soft bosom of that gentle maid
There dwells more goodness than the rigid race
Of moral pedants e'er believed, or taught.
With what amazing constancy and truth,
Doth she sustain the absence of our son,

Whom more than life she loves! How shun for him,
Whom we shall ne'er see more, the rich and great;
Who own her charms, and sigh to make her happy!
Since our misfortunes we have found no friend,
None who regarded our distress, but her;
And she, by what I have observed of late,
Is wearied, or exhausted. Curst condition!—
To live a burden to one only friend,
And blast her youth with our contagious woe!—
Who, that had reason, soul, or sense, would bear it
A moment longer? Then this honest wretch!—
I must dismiss him—Why should I detain
A grateful, generous youth to perish with me?
His service may procure him bread elsewhere,
Though I have none to give him.—Prithee, Randal!
How long hast thou been with me?

Rand. Fifteen years.
I was a very child, when first you took me,
To wait upon your son, my dear young master.
I oft have wished I'd gone to India with him,
Though you, desponding, give him o'er for lost.—
[*Old Wilmot wipes his eyes.*
I am to blame: this talk revives your sorrow
For his long absence.

O. Wilm. That cannot be revived,
Which never died.

Rand. The whole of my intent
Was to confess your bounty, that supplied
The loss of both my parents: I was long
The object of your charitable care.

O. Wilm. No more of that: Thou hast served me longer since
Without reward; so that account is balanced,
Or rather I'm thy debtor. I remember,
When poverty began to show her face
Within these walls, and all my other servants,
Like pampered vermin from a falling house,
Retreated with the plunder they had gained,
And left me, too indulgent and remiss
For such ungrateful wretches, to be crushed
Beneath the ruin they had helped to make,
That you, more good than wise, refused to leave me.

Rand. Nay, I beseech you, sir!—

O. Wilm. With my distress,
In perfect contradiction to the world,
Thy love, respect, and diligence, increased.
Now, all the recompence within my power,
Is to discharge thee, Randal, from my hard,
Unprofitable service.

Rand. Heaven forbid!
Shall I forsake you in your worst necessity?—
Believe me, sir! my honest soul abhors
The barbarous thought.

O. Wilm. What! canst thou feed on air?
I have not left wherewith to purchase food
For one meal more.

Rand. Rather than leave you thus,
I'll beg my bread, and live on others bounty,
While I serve you.

O. Wilm. Down, down my swelling heart,
Or burst in silence! 'Tis thy cruel fate
Insults thee by his kindness—He is innocent
Of all the pain it gives thee—Go thy ways:
I will no more suppress thy youthful hopes
Of rising in the world.

Rand. 'Tis true, I'm young,
And never tried my fortune, or my genius,
Which may perhaps find out some happy means,
As yet unthought of, to supply your wants.

O. Wilm. Thou torturest me: I hate all obligations
Which I can ne'er return—And who art thou,
That I should stoop to take them from thy hand!
Care for thyself, but take no thought for me;
I will not want thee—trouble me no more.

Rand. Be not offended, sir, and I will go.
I ne'er repined at your commands before;
But, Heaven's my witness, I obey you now
With strong reluctance, and a heavy heart!
Farewell, my worthy master! [*Going.*

O. Wilm. Farewell!—Stay!
As thou art yet a stranger to the world,
Of which, alas! I've had too much experience,
I should, methinks, before we part, bestow
A little counsel on thee.—Dry thy eyes:
If thou weepest thus, I shall proceed no farther.
Dost thou aspire to greatness, or to wealth?
Quit books, and the unprofitable search
Of wisdom there, and study human kind:
No science will avail thee without that;
But that obtained, thou needest not any other.
This will instruct thee to conceal thy views,
And wear the face of probity and honour,
Till thou hast gained thy end: which must be ever
Thy own advantage, at that man's expence,
Who shall be weak enough to think thee honest.

Rand. You mock me, sure!

O. Wilm. I never was more serious.

Rand. Why should you counsel what you scorned to practise?

O. Wilm. Because that foolish scorn has been my ruin.
I've been an idiot, but would have thee wiser,
And treat mankind, as they would treat thee, Randal,
As they deserve, and I've been treated by them:
Thou'st seen by me, and those who now despise me,
How men of fortune fall, and beggars rise.
Shun my example; treasure up my precepts;
The world's before thee: be a knave, and prosper!
What, art thou dumb? [*After a long pause.*

Rand. Amazement ties my tongue!
Where are your former principles?

O. Wilm. No matter:
Suppose I have renounced them: I have passions

And love thee still; therefore would have thee think,
The world is all a scene of deep deceit,
And he, who deals with mankind on the square,
Is his own bubble, and undoes himself.
Farewell, and mark my counsel, boy. [*Exit.*

Rand. Amazement!
Is this the man I thought so wise and just?
What! teach and counsel me to be a villain!
Sure grief has made him frantic, or some fiend
Assumed his shape! I shall suspect my senses.
High-minded he was ever, and improvident;
But pitiful and generous to a fault.
Pleasure he loved, but honour was his idol.
O fatal change! O horrid transformation!
So a majestic temple, sunk to ruin,
Becomes the loathsome shelter and abode
Of lurking serpents, toads, and beasts of prey;
And scaly dragons hiss, and lions roar,
Where wisdom taught, and music charmed, before! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Charlotte's House.*

Enter CHARLOTTE *and* MARIA.

Char. What terror and amazement must they feel,
Who die by ship-wreck!

Mar. 'Tis a dreadful thought!

Char. Aye! is it not, Maria?—To descend,
Living and conscious, to the watery tomb!——
Alas! had we no sorrows of our own,
The frequent instances of others woe
Must give a generous mind a world of pain.
But you forget you promised me to sing,
Though cheerfulness and I have long been strangers,
Harmonious sounds are still delightful to me.
There's sure no passion in the human soul,
But finds its food in music. I would hear
The song, composed by that unhappy maid,
Whose faithful lover 'scaped a thousand perils,
From rocks, and sands, and the devouring deep;
And, after all, being arrived at home,
Passing a narrow brook, was drowned there,
And perished in her sight.

SONG.

Mar. *Cease, cease, heart-easing tears!*
Adieu, you flattering fears,
Which seven long tedious years
Taught me to bear.
Tears are for lighter woes;
Fear no such danger knows,
As fate remorseless shews,
Endless despair!
Dear cause of all my pain,
On the wide stormy main,
Thou wast preserved in vain,
Though still adored.
Hadst thou died there unseen,
My wounded eyes had been
Saved from the direst scene
Maid e'er deplored.

[*Charlotte finds a letter.*

Char. What's this?—A letter superscribed to me!
None could convey it here but you, Maria.
Ungenerous, cruel maid! to use me thus!
To join with flattering men to break my peace,
And persecute me to the last retreat!

Mar. Why should it break your peace, to hear the sighs
Of honourable love? This letter is——

Char. No matter whence; return it back unopened:
I have no love, no charms, but for my Wilmot,
Nor would have any.

Mar. Alas! Wilmot's dead!
Or, living, dead to you.

Char. I'll not despair: Patience shall cherish hope;
Nor wrong his honour by unjust suspicion.
I know his truth, and will preserve my own.
But, to prevent all future importunity,
Know, thou incessant foe to my repose,
Whether he sleeps secure from mortal cares,
In the deep bosom of the boisterous main,
Or, tost with tempest, still endures its rage;
No second choice shall violate my vows;
High Heaven, which heard them, and abhors the perjured,
Can witness, they were made without reserve;
Never to be retracted, ne'er dissolved
By accident or absence, time or death.

Mar. And did your vows oblige you to support
His haughty parents, to your utter ruin?——
Well may you weep to think on what you've done!

Char. I weep to think, that I can do no more
For their support. What will become of them!
The hoary, helpless, miserable pair!

Mar. What I can't praise, you force me to admire,
And mourn for you, as you lament for them.
Your patience, constancy, and resignation,
Merit a better fate.

Char. So pride would tell me,
And vain self-love; but I believe them not:
And if, by wanting pleasure, I have gained
Humility, I'm richer for my loss.

Mar. You have the heavenly art still to improve
Your mind by all events.—But here comes one,
Whose pride seems to increase with her misfortunes.
Her faded dress, unfashionably fine,
As ill conceals her poverty, as that
Strained complaisance her haughty, swelling heart.
Though perishing with want, so far from asking,
She ne'er receives a favour uncompelled,
And, while she ruins, scorns to be obliged:
Let me depart; I know she loves me not.
[*Exit Maria.*

Enter AGNES.

Char. This visit's kind.
Agn. Few else would think it so:
Those who would once have thought themselves much honoured
By the least favour, though 'twere but a look,
I could have shewn them, now refuse to see me.
'Tis misery enough to be reduced
To the low level of the common herd,
Who, born to beggary, envy all above them;
But 'tis the curse of curses, to endure
The insolent contempt of those we scorn.
Char. By scorning, we provoke them to contempt,
And thus offend, and suffer in our turns.
We must have patience.
Agn. No, I scorn them yet!
But there's no end of suffering: Who can say,
Their sorrows are complete? My wretched husband,
Tired with our woes, and hopeless of relief,
Grows sick of life,
And, urged by indignation and despair,
Would plunge into eternity at once,
By foul self-murder!
Char. Gracious Heaven support him!
Agn. His fixed love for me,
Whom he would fain persuade to share his fate,
And take the same, uncertain, dreadful course,
Alone withholds his hand.
Char. And may it ever!
Agn. I've known with him the two extremes of life,
The highest happiness, and deepest woe,
With all the sharp and bitter aggravations
Of such a vast transition—Such a fall
In the decline of life!—I have as quick,
As exquisite, a sense of pain as he,
And would do any thing, but die, to end it;
But there my courage fails. Death is the worst
That fate can bring, and cuts off every hope.
Char. We must not chuse, but strive to bear our lot
Without reproach, or guilt. By one rash act
Of desperation, we may overthrow
The merit we've been raising all our days,
And lose our whole reward. And now, methinks,
Now, more than ever, we have cause to fear,
And be upon our guard. The hand of Heaven
Spreads clouds on clouds o'er our benighted heads,
And, wrapt in darkness, doubles our distresses.
I had, the night last past, repeated twice,
A strange and awful dream. I would not yield
To fearful superstition, nor despise
The admonition of a friendly power,
That wished my good.
Agn. I have certain plagues enough,
Without the help of dreams, to make me wretched.
Char. I would not stake my happiness or duty
On their uncertain credit, nor on aught
But reason, and the known decrees of Heaven.
Yet dreams have sometimes shewn events to come,
And may excite to vigilance and care.
My vision may be such, and sent to warn us
(Now we are tried by multiplied afflictions),
To mark each motion of our swelling hearts,
Lest we attempt to extricate ourselves,
And seek deliverance by forbidden ways——
To keep our hopes and innocence entire,
Till we're dismist to join the happy dead,
Or Heaven relieves us here.
Agn. Well, to your dream.
Char. Methought I sat, in a dark winter's night,
On the wide summit of a barren mountain;
The sharp bleak winds pierced through my shivering frame,
And storms of hail, and sleet, and driving rains,
Beat, with impetuous fury, on my head,
Drenched my chilled limbs, and poured a deluge round me.
On one hand, ever-gentle Patience sat,
On whose calm bosom I reclined my head;
And, on the other, silent Contemplation.
At length, to my unclosed and watchful eyes,
That long had rolled in darkness, dawn appeared;
And I beheld a man, an utter stranger,
But of a graceful and exalted mien,
Who pressed, with eager transport, to embrace me.
I shunned his arms. But at some words he spoke,
Which I have now forgot, I turned again;
But he was gone. And, oh! transporting sight!
Your son, my dearest Wilmot! filled his place.
Agn. If I regarded dreams, I should expect
Some fair event from yours.
Char. But what's to come,
Though more obscure, is terrible indeed.
Methought we parted soon, and when I sought him,
You, and his father—Yes, you both were there—
Strove to conceal him from me. I pursued you
Both with my cries, and called on Heaven and earth
To judge my wrongs, and force you to reveal
Where you had hid my love, my life, my Wilmot!
Agn. Unless you mean to offend me, spare the rest.
'Tis just as likely Wilmot should return,
As we become your foes.
Char. Far be such thought
From Charlotte's breast! But when I heard you name
Self-murder, it revived the frightful image
Of such a dreadful scene!——
Agn. You will persist!——
Char. Excuse me: I have done. Being a dream,
I thought, at least, it could not give offence.
Agn. You could not think so, had you thought at all.
But I take nothing ill from thee. Adieu!

I have tarried longer than I first intended,
And my poor husband mourns the while alone.
[*Exit Agnes.*
Char. She's gone abruptly, and I fear displeased.
The least appearance of advice or caution,
Sets her impatient temper in a flame.
When grief, that well might humble, swells our pride,
And pride, encreasing, aggravates our grief,
The tempest must prevail, till we are lost.
Heaven grant a fairer issue for her sorrows!
[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The Town and Port of Penryn.*

Enter Young WILMOT *and* EUSTACE *in Indian habits.*

Y. Wilmot. Welcome, my friend, to Penryn! Here we're safe.
Eust. Then we're delivered twice: first from the sea,
And then from men, who, more remorseless, prey
On shipwrecked wretches, and who spoil, and murder
Those, whom fell tempests and devouring waves,
In all their fury, spared.
Y. Wilm. It is a scandal,
(Though malice must acquit the better sort)
The rude unpolished people here in Cornwall
Have long lain under, and with too much justice:
For 'tis an evil grown almost inveterate,
And asks a bold and skilful hand to cure.
Eust. Your treasure's safe, I hope.
Y. Wilm. 'Tis here, thank Heaven!
Being in jewels, when I saw our danger,
I hid it in my bosom.
Eust. I observed you,
And wonder how you could command your thoughts,
In such a time of terror and confusion.
Y. Wilm. My thoughts were then at home.—O England! England!
Thou seat of plenty, liberty, and health!
With transport I behold thy verdant fields,
Thy lofty mountains rich with useful ore,
Thy numerous herds, thy flocks, and winding streams!
After a long and tedious absence, Eustace!
With what delight we breathe our native air,
And tread the genial soil that bore us first!
'Tis said, the world is every wise man's country;
Yet after having viewed its various nations,
I am weak enough still to prefer my own
To all I've seen beside—You smile, my friend!
And think, perhaps, 'tis instinct more than reason.
Why be it so: Instinct preceded reason,
Even in the wisest men, and may sometimes
Be much the better guide. But be it either,
I must confess, that even death itself
Appeared to me with twice its native horrors,
When apprehended in a foreign land.
Death is, no doubt, in every place the same;
Yet nature casts a look towards home, and most,
Who have it in their power, chuse to expire
Where they first drew their breath.
Eust. Believe me, Wilmot,
Your grave reflections were not what I smiled at;
I own the truth. That we're returned to England
Affords me all the pleasure you can feel.
Yet I must think a warmer passion moves you:
Thinking of that I smiled.
Y. Wilm. O Eustace! Eustace!
Thou knowest, for I have confest to thee, I love;
But having never seen the charming maid,
Thou canst not know the fierceness of my flame.
My hopes and fears, like the tempestuous seas
That we have past, now mount me to the skies,
Now hurl me down from that stupendous height,
And drive me to the centre. Did you know
How much depends on this important hour,
You would not be surprised to see me thus.
The sinking fortune of our ancient house
Compelled me young to leave my native country,
My weeping parents, and my lovely Charlotte,
Who ruled, and must for ever rule, my fate.
——O! should my Charlotte, doubtful of my truth,
Or in despair ever to see me more,
Have given herself to some more happy lover!—
Distraction's in the thought! Or should my parents,
Grieved for my absence, and opprest with want,
Have sunk beneath their burden and expired,
While I too late was flying to relieve them;
The end of all my long and weary travels,
The hope that made success itself a blessing,
Being defeated and for ever lost——
What were the riches of the world to me?
Eust. The wretch, who fears all that is possible,
Must suffer more than he, who feels the worst
A man can feel, yet lives exempt from fear.
A woman may be false, and friends are mortal;
And yet your aged parents may be living,
And your fair mistress constant.
Y. Wilm. True, they may;
I doubt, but I despair not. No, my friend!
My hopes are strong and lively as my fears;
They tell me, Charlotte is as true as fair;
That we shall meet never to part again;
That I shall see my parents, kiss the tears
From their pale hollow cheeks, cheer their sad hearts,
And drive that gaping phantom, meagre want,
For ever from their board; their days to come
Crown all with peace, with pleasure and abundance;
Receive their fond embraces and their blessings,
And be a blessing to them.
Eust. 'Tis our weakness:
Blind to events, we reason in the dark,
And fondly apprehend what none e'er found,

Or ever shall, pleasure and pain unmixt;
And flatter and torment ourselves by turns,
With what shall never be.
Y. Wilm. I'll go this instant
To seek my Charlotte, and explore my fate.
Eust. What, in that foreign habit!
Y. Wilm. That's a trifle,
Not worth my thoughts.
Eust. The hardships you've endured,
And your long stay beneath the burning zone,
Where one eternal sultry summer reigns,
Have marred the native hue of your complexion:
Methinks you look more like a sun-burnt Indian,
Than a Briton.
Y. Wilm. Well, 'tis no matter, Eustace!
I hope my mind's not altered for the worse,
And for my outside—But inform me, friend,
When I may hope to see you.
Eust. When you please:
You'll find me at the inn.
Y. Wilm. When I have learned my doom, expect me there.
'Till then, farewell!
Eust. Farewell! Success attend you!
[*Exeunt severally.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Charlotte's House.*

Enter Charlotte thoughtful; and soon after a Servant from the other side.

Serv. Madam, a stranger in a foreign habit desires to see you.
Char. In a foreign habit!
'Tis strange, and unexpected. But admit him.
[*Exit Servant.*
Who can this stranger be! I know no foreigner——

Enter Young WILMOT.

Nor any man like this.
Y. Wilm. Ten thousand joys!
[*Going to embrace her.*
Char. Sir, you are too bold—Forbear, and let me know
What business brought you here, or leave the place.
Y. Wilm. Perfidious maid! Am I forgot, or scorned?
Char. Can I forget a man I never knew!
Y. Wilm. My fears are true; some other has her heart:
She's lost: My fatal absence has undone me.
[*Aside.*
O! could thy Wilmot have forgot thee, Charlotte!
Char. Ha! Wilmot! say! what do your words import?
O gentle stranger! ease my swelling heart;
What dost thou know of Wilmot?
Y. Wilm. This I know:
When all the winds of heaven seemed to conspire
Against the stormy main, and dreadful peals
Of rattling thunder deafened every ear,
And drowned the affrightened mariners' loud cries;
When livid lightning spread its sulphurous flames
Through all the dark horizon, and disclosed
The raging seas incensed to his destruction;
When the good ship, in which he was embarked,
Broke, and, o'erwhelmed by the impetuous surge,
Sunk to the oozy bottom of the deep,
And left him struggling with the warring waves;
In that dread moment, in the jaws of death,
When his strength failed, and every hope forsook him,
And his last breath pressed towards his trembling lips,
The neighbouring rocks, that echoed to his moan,
Returned no sound articulate but—*Charlotte.*
Char. The fatal tempest, whose description strikes
The hearer with astonishment, is ceased;
And Wilmot is at rest. The fiercer storm
Of swelling passions, that o'erwhelms the soul,
And rages worse than the mad foaming seas
In which he perished, ne'er shall vex him more.
Y. Wilm. Thou seemest to think he's dead; enjoy that thought;
Persuade yourself that what you wish is true,
And triumph in your falsehood. Yes, he's dead;
You were his fate. The cruel winds and waves,
That cast him pale and breathless on the shore,
Spared him for greater woes—to know his Charlotte,
Forgetting all her vows to him and heaven,
Had cast him from her thoughts—Then, then he died;
But never can have rest. Even now he wanders,
A sad, repining, discontented ghost,
The unsubstantial shadow of himself,
And pours his plaintive groans in thy deaf ears,
And stalks, unseen, before thee.
Char. 'Tis enough:
Detested falsehood now has done its worst.
And art thou dead? And wouldst thou die, my Wilmot!
For one thou thought'st unjust? Thou soul of truth!
What must be done? Which way shall I express
Unutterable woe? Or how convince
Thy dear departed spirit of the love,
The eternal love, and never-failing faith,
Of thy much injured, lost, despairing Charlotte?
Y. Wilm. Be still, my fluttering heart; hope not too soon!
Perhaps I dream, and this is all illusion. [*Aside.*

Char. If, as some teach, the spirit after death,
Free from the bounds and ties of sordid earth,
Can trace us to our most concealed retreat,
See all we act, and read our very thoughts;
To thee, O Wilmot! kneeling I appeal.
If e'er I swerved in action, word, or thought,
Or ever wished to taste a joy on earth
That centred not in thee, since last we parted;
May we ne'er meet again, but thy loud wrongs
So close the ear of mercy to my cries,
That I may never see those bright abodes,
Where truth and virtue only have admission,
And thou inhabitest now!

Y. Wilm. Assist me, Heaven!
Preserve my reason, memory, and sense!
O moderate my fierce tumultuous joys,
Or their excess will drive me to distraction.
O Charlotte! Charlotte! lovely, virtuous maid!
Can thy firm mind, in spite of time and absence,
Remain unshaken, and support its truth;
And yet thy frailer memory retain
No image, no idea of thy lover?
Why dost thou gaze so wildly? Look on me;
Turn thy dear eyes this way; observe me well.
Have scorching climates, time, and this strange habit,
So changed and so disguised thy faithful Wilmot,
That nothing in my voice, my face, or mein,
Remains to tell my Charlotte I am he!

[*After viewing him some time, she approaches weeping, and gives him her hand; and then turning towards him, sinks upon his bosom.*]

Why dost thou weep? Why dost thou tremble thus?
Why doth thy panting heart and cautious touch
Speak thee but half convinced? Whence are thy fears?
Why art thou silent? Canst thou doubt me still?

Char. No, Wilmot! no; I'm blind with too much light,
O'ercome with wonder, and oppressed with joy.
This vast profusion of extreme delight,
Rising at once, and bursting from despair,
Defies the aid of words, and mocks description.
But for one sorrow, one sad scene of anguish,
That checks the swelling torrent of my joys,
I could not bear the transport.

Y. Wilm. Let me know it:
Give me my portion of thy sorrow, Charlotte!
Let me partake thy grief, or bear it for thee.

Char. Alas! my Wilmot! these sad tears are thine;
They flow for thy misfortunes. I am pierced
With all the agonies of strong compassion,
With all the bitter anguish you must feel,
When you shall hear your parents———

Y. Wilm. Are no more!

Char. You apprehend me wrong.

Y. Wilm. Perhaps I do;
Perhaps you mean to say, the greedy grave
Was satisfied with one, and one is left
To bless my longing eyes. But which, my Charlotte?

Char. Afflict yourself no more with groundless fears:
Your parents both are living. Their distress,
The poverty, to which they are reduced,
In spite of my weak aid, was what I mourned:
That poverty in age, to them whose youth
Was crowned with full prosperity, I fear,
Is worse, much worse, than death.

Y. Wilm. My joy's complete!
My parents living, and possessed of thee!—
From this blest hour, the happiest of my life,
I'll date my rest. My anxious hopes and fears,
My weary travels, and my dangers past,
Are now rewarded all: Now I rejoice
In my success, and count my riches gain.
For know, my soul's best treasure! I have wealth
Enough to glut even avarice itself:
No more shall cruel want, or proud contempt,
Oppress the sinking spirits, or insult
The hoary heads, of those who gave me being.

Char. 'Tis now, O riches, I conceive your worth:
You are not base, nor can you be superfluous,
But when misplaced in base and sordid hands.
Fly, fly, my Wilmot! leave thy happy Charlotte!
Thy filial piety, the sighs and tears
Of thy lamenting parents, call thee hence.

Y. Wilm. I have a friend, the partner of my voyage,
Who, in the storm last night, was shipwrecked with me.

Char. Shipwrecked last night!—O you immortal powers!
What have you suffered! How were you preserved?

Y. Wilm. Let that, and all my other strange escapes
And perilous adventures, be the theme
Of many a happy winter night to come.
My present purpose was to intreat my angel,
To know this friend, this other better Wilmot,
And come with him this evening to my father's:
I'll send him to thee.

Char. I consent with pleasure.

Y. Wilm. Heavens! what a night! How shall I bear my joy!
My parents', your's, my friend's, all will be mine.
If such the early hopes, the vernal bloom,
The distant prospect of my future bliss,
Then what the ruddy autumn! What the fruit,
The full possession of thy heavenly charms!

[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.—*A street in Penryn.*

Enter RANDAL.

Rand. Poor! poor! and friendless! whither shall I wander,
And to what point direct my views and hopes?
A menial servant!—No—What! shall I live,

Here, in this land of freedom, live distinguished,
And marked the willing slave of some proud subject!——
To swell his useless train for broken fragments,
The cold remains of his superfluous board?—
I would aspire to something more and better.
Turn thy eyes then to the prolific ocean,
Whose spacious bosom opens to thy view:
There deathless honour, and unenvied wealth,
Have often crowned the brave adventurer's toils.
This is the native uncontested right,
The fair inheritance, of every Briton,
That dares put in his claim—My choice is made:
A long farewell to Cornwall, and to England!
If I return—But stay, what stranger's this,
Who, as he views me, seems to mend his pace?

Enter Young WILMOT.

Y. Wilm. Randal!—The dear companion of my youth!—
Sure lavish fortune means to give me all
I could desire, or ask for, this blessed day,
And leave me nothing to expect hereafter.
Rand. Your pardon, sir! I know but one on earth
Could properly salute me by the title
You're pleased to give me, and I would not think
That you are he—that you are Wilmot.
Y. Wilm. Why?
Rand. Because I could not bear the disappointment,
If I should be deceived.
Y. Wilm. I am pleased to hear it:
Thy friendly fears better express thy thoughts
Than words could do.
Rand. O! Wilmot! O! my master!
Are you returned?
Y. Wilm. I have not yet embraced
My parents—I shall see you at my father's?
Rand. No, I'm discharged from thence—O sir! such ruin——
Y. Wilm. I've heard it all, and hasten to relieve them:
Sure Heaven hath blessed me to that very end:
I've wealth enough; nor shalt thou want a part.
Rand. I have a part already—I am blessed
In your success, and share in all your joys.
Y. Wilm. I doubt it not. But tell me, dost thou think,
My parents not suspecting my return,
That I may visit them, and not be known?
Rand. 'Tis hard for me to judge. You are already
Grown so familiar to me, that I wonder
I knew you not at first: yet it may be;
For you're much altered, and they think you dead.
Y. Wilm. This is certain, Charlotte beheld me long,
And heard my loud reproaches, and complaints,
Without remembering she had ever seen me.
My mind at ease grows wanton: I would fain
Refine on happiness. Why may I not
Indulge my curiosity, and try
If it be possible, by seeing first
My parents as a stranger, to improve
Their pleasure by surprise?
Rand. It may indeed
Enhance your own, to see from what despair
Your timely coming, and unhoped success,
Have given you power to raise them.
Y. Wilm. I remember,
E'er since we learned together, you excelled
In writing fairly, and could imitate
Whatever hand you saw with great exactness.
I therefore beg you'll write, in Charlotte's name
And character, a letter to my father;
And recommend me, as a friend of hers,
To his acquaintance.
Rand. Sir, if you desire it—
And yet——
Y. Wilm. Nay, no objections! 'Twill save time,
Most precious with me now. For the deception,
If doing what my Charlotte will approve,
'Cause done for me and with a good intent,
Deserves the name, I'll answer it myself.
If this succeeds, I purpose to defer
Discovering who I am till Charlotte comes,
And thou, and all who love me. Ev'ry friend
Who witnesses my happiness to-night,
Will, by partaking, multiply my joys.
Rand. You grow luxurious in imagination.
Could I deny you aught, I would not write
This letter. To say true, I ever thought
Your boundless curiosity a weakness.
Y. Wilm. What canst thou blame in this?
Rand. Your pardon, sir!
Perhaps I spoke too freely;
I'm ready to obey your orders.
Y. Wilm. I am much thy debtor,
But I shall find a time to quit thy kindness.
O Randal! but imagine to thyself
The floods of transport, the sincere delight,
That all my friends will feel, when I disclose
To my astonished parents my return,
And then confess, that I have well contrived,
By giving others joy, to exalt my own.

SCENE III.—*Old Wilmot's House discovered.*

Old WILMOT *and* AGNES.

O. Wilm. Here, take this Seneca: this haughty pedant,
Who, governing the master of mankind,
And awing power imperial, prates of patience;
And praises poverty—possessed of millions:
—Sell him, and buy us bread. The scantiest meal
The vilest copy of his book e'er purchased,
Will give us more relief in this distress,
Than all his boasted precepts.—Nay, no tears;
Keep them to move compassion when you beg.
Agn. My heart may break, but never stoop to that.

O. Wilm. Nor would I live to see it—But dispatch. [*Exit Agnes.*
Where must I charge this length of misery,
That gathers force each moment as it rolls,
And must at last o'erwhelm me, but on hope:
Vain, flattering, delusive, groundless hope,
That has for years deceived me?—Had I thought
As I do now, as wise men ever think,
When first this hell of poverty o'ertook me,
That power to die implies a right to do it,
And should be used when life becomes a pain,
What plagues had I prevented!—True, my wife
Is still a slave to prejudice and fear——
I would not leave my better part, the dear
[*Weeps.*
Faithful companion of my happier days,
To bear the weight of age and want alone.
—I'll try once more—

Enter Agnes, *and after her Young* Wilmot.

O. Wilm. Returned, my life! so soon!—
Agn. The unexpected coming of this stranger
Prevents my going yet.
Y. Wilm. You are, I presume,
The gentleman to whom this is directed.
[*Gives a letter.*
What wild neglect, the token of despair,
What indigence, what misery, appears
In this once happy house! What discontent,
What anguish and confusion fill the faces
Of its dejected owners!
O. Wilm. [*Having read the letter.*]
—Sir, such welcome
As this poor house affords, you may command.
Our ever friendly neighbour—Once we hoped
To have called fair Charlotte by a dearer name,
But we have done with hope—I pray excuse
This incoherence—We had once a son. [*Weeps.*
Agn. That you are come from that dear virtuous maid,
Revives in us the memory of a loss,
Which, though long since, we have not learned to bear.
Y. Wilm. The joy to see them, and the bitter pain
It is to see them thus, touches my soul
With tenderness and grief, that will overflow.
——They know me not, and yet I shall, I fear,
Defeat my purpose, and betray myself. [*Aside.*
O. Wilm. The lady calls you here her valued friend;
Enough, though nothing more should be implied,
To recommend you to our best esteem;
—A worthless acquisition! May she find
Some means that better may express her kindness!
But she, perhaps, has purposed to enrich
You with herself, and end her fruitless sorrow
For one, whom death alone can justify
For leaving her so long. If it be so,
May you repair his loss, and be to Charlotte
A second, happier Wilmot! Partial nature,
Who only favours youth, as feeble age
Were not her offspring or below her care,
Has sealed our doom: No second hope shall spring,
To dry our tears, and dissipate despair.
Agn. The last and most abandoned of our kind,
By heaven and earth neglected or despised,
The loathsome grave, that robbed us of our son,
And all our joys in him, must be our refuge.
Y. Wilm. Let ghosts unpardoned, or devoted fiends,
Fear without hope, and wail in such sad strains;
But grace defend the living from despair!
The darkest hours precede the rising sun,
And mercy may appear, when least expected.
O. Wilm. This I have heard a thousand times repeated,
And have, believing, been as oft deceived.
Y. Wilm. Behold in me an instance of its truth.
At sea twice shipwrecked, and as oft the prey
Of lawless pirates; by the Arabs thrice
Surprized, and robbed on shore; and once reduced
To worse than these, the sum of all distress
That the most wretched feel on this side hell,
Ev'n slavery itself: Yet here I stand,
Except one trouble, that will quickly end,
The happiest of mankind.
O. Wilm. A rare example
Of fortune's changes; apter to surprise
Or entertain, than comfort or instruct.
If you would reason from events, be just,
And count, when you escaped, how many perished;
And draw your inference thence.
Agn. Alas! Who knows,
But we were rendered childless by some storm,
In which you, though preserved, might bear a part?
Y. Wilm. How has my curiosity betrayed me
Into superfluous pain! I faint with fondness;
And shall, if I stay longer, rush upon them,
Proclaim myself their son, kiss and embrace them,
'Till, with the excess of pleasure and surprize,
Their souls, transported, their frail mansions quit,
And leave them breathless in my longing arms.
By circumstances then and slow degrees,
They must be let into a happiness,
Too great for them to bear at once, and live:
That Charlotte will perform. I need not feign
To ask an hour for rest. [*Aside.*] Sir, I intreat
The favour to retire, where for a while
I may repose myself. You will excuse
This freedom, and the trouble that I give you.
'Tis long since I have slept, and nature calls.
O. Wilm. I pray no more: Believe we're only troubled,
That you should think any excuse were needful.
Y. Wilm. The weight of this to me is some incumbrance,
[*Takes a casket out of his bosom, and gives it to his mother.*
And its contents of value: If you please

To take the charge of it 'till I awake,
I shall not rest the worse. If I should sleep
'Till I am asked for, as perhaps I may,
I beg that you would wake me.
Agn. Doubt it not:
Distracted as I am with various woes,
I shall remember that. [*Exit, with Old Wilmot.*
Y. Wilm. Merciless grief!

What ravage has it made! how has it changed
Her lovely form and mind! I feel her anguish,
And dread I know not what from her despair.
My father too——O grant them patience, Heaven!
A little longer, a few short hours more,
And all their cares, and mine, shall end for ever.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Scene continues.*

Enter AGNES *alone, with the casket in her hand.*

Agn. WHO should this stranger be? And then this casket—
He says it is of value, and yet trusts it,
As if a trifle, to a stranger's hand—
His confidence amazes me—Perhaps
It is not what he says—I am strongly tempted
To open it, and see—NO, let it rest!
Why should I pry into the cares of others,
Who have so many sorrows of my own?
With how much ease the spring gives way—Surprising!
My eyes are dazzled, and my ravished heart
Leaps at the glorious sight. How bright's the lustre,
And how immense the worth, of these fair jewels!
Ay, such a treasure would expel for ever
Base poverty, and all its abject train;
Famine; the cold neglect of friends; the scorn,
Or more provoking pity, of the world.
Plenty, content, and power might take their turn,
And lofty pride bare its aspiring head
At our approach, and once more bend before us.
A pleasing dream! 'Tis past; and now I wake.
For sure it was a happiness to think,
Though but a moment, such a treasure mine.
Nay, it was more than thought——I saw and touched
The bright temptation, and I see it yet—
'Tis here—'tis mine—I have it in possession—
Must I resign it? Must I give it back?
Am I in love with misery and want,
To rob myself, and court so vast a loss?
Retain it then—But how? There is a way—
Why sinks my heart? Why does my blood run cold?
Why am I thrilled with horror? 'Tis not choice,
But dire necessity suggests the thought.

Enter Old WILMOT.

O. Wilm. The mind contented, with how little pains
The wandering senses yield to soft repose!
He's fallen asleep already—Happy man!
What dost thou think, my Agnes, of our guest?
He seems to me a youth of great humanity:
Just ere he closed his eyes, that swam in tears,
He wrung my hand, and pressed it to his lips;
And with a look, that pierced me to the soul,
Begged me to comfort thee: And—dost thou hear me?
What art thou gazing on? Fie, 'tis not well.
This casket was delivered to you closed:
Why have you opened it? Should this be known,
How mean must we appear!
Agn. And who shall know it?
O. Wilm. There is a kind of pride, a decent dignity
Due to ourselves; which, spite of our misfortunes,
May be maintained, and cherished to the last.
To live without reproach, and without leave
To quit the world, shews sovereign contempt,
And noble scorn of its relentless malice.
Agn. Shews sovereign madness, and a scorn of sense.
Pursue no farther this detested theme:
I will not die; I will not leave the world
For all that you can urge, until compelled.
O. Wilm. To chase a shadow, when the setting sun
Is darting his last rays, were just as wise
As your anxiety for fleeting life,
Now the last means for its support are failing:
Were famine not as mortal as the sword,
Your warmth might be excused—But take thy choice:
Die how you will, you shall not die alone.
Agn. Nor live, I hope.
O Wilm. There is no fear of that.
Agn. Then, we'll live both.
O. Wilm. Strange folly? where the means?
Agn. There—those jewels!
O. Wilm. Ha! Take heed!
Perhaps thou dost but try me—yet take heed!
There's nothing so monstrous but the mind of man,
In some conditions, may be bought to approve:
Theft, sacrilege, treason, and parricide,
When flattering opportunity enticed,
And desperation drove, have been committed
By those, who once would start to hear them named.
Agn. And add to these detested suicide,
Which, by a crime much less, we may avoid.
O. Wilm. How couldst thou form a thought so very damning?
So advantageous, so secure, and easy;
And yet so cruel, and so full of horror!

Agn. 'Tis less impiety, less against nature,
To take another's life, than end our own.
O. Wilm. No matter which, the less or greater crime:
Howe'er we may deceive ourselves or others,
We act from inclination, not by rule,
Or none could act amiss: and that all err,
None but the conscious hypocrite denies.
O! what is man, his excellence and strength,
When in an hour of trial and desertion,
Reason, his noblest power, may be suborned
To plead the cause of vile assassination!
Agn. You're too severe: Reason may justly plead
For our own preservation.
O. Wilm. Rest contented:
Whate'er resistance I may seem to make,
I am betrayed within: My will's seduced,
And my whole soul infected. The desire
Of life returns, and brings with it a train
Of appetites, that rage to be supplied!
Whoever stands to parley with temptation,
Parleys to be o'ercome.
Agn. Then nought remains
But the swift execution of a deed,
That is not to be thought on, or delayed—
O. Wilm. Generous unhappy man! O! what could move thee
To put thy life and fortune in the hands
Of wretches mad with anguish!
Agn. By what means
Shall we effect his death?
O. Wilm. Why, what a fiend!
How cruel, how remorseless and impatient
Have pride and poverty made thee!
Agn. Barbarous man!
Whose wasteful riots ruined our estate,
And drove our son, ere the first down had spread
His rosy cheeks, spite of my sad presages,
Earnest intreaties, agonies, and tears,
To seek his bread amongst strangers, and to perish
In some remote, inhospitable land;
The loveliest youth, in person and in mind,
That ever crowned a groaning mother's pains!
Where was thy pity, where thy patience then?
Thou cruel husband! thou unnatural father!
Thou most remorseless, most ungrateful man!
To waste my fortune, rob me of my son,
To drive me to despair, and then reproach me
For being what thou hast made me!
O. Wilm. Dry thy tears:
I ought not to reproach thee. I confess
That thou hast suffered much: So have we both.
But chide no more; I am wrought up to thy purpose.
The poor, ill-fated, unsuspecting victim,
Ere he reclined him on the fatal couch,
From which he's ne'er to rise, took off the sash,
And costly dagger that thou saw'st him wear,
And thus, unthinking, furnished us with arms
Against himself. Steal to the door,
And bring me word, if he be still asleep.
[*Exit Agnes.*
Or I'm deceived, or he pronounced himself
The happiest of mankind. Deluded wretch!
Thy thoughts are perishing, thy youthful joys,
Touched by the icy hand of grisly death,
Are withering in their bloom—But, thought extinguished,
He'll never know the loss,
Nor feel the bitter pangs of disappointment—
Then I was wrong in counting him a wretch:
To die well pleased,
Is all the happiest of mankind can hope for.
To be a wretch, is to survive the loss
Of every joy, and even hope itself,
As I have done—Why do I mourn him then?
For, by the anguish of my tortured soul,
He's to be envied, if compared with me.

Enter AGNES *with* YOUNG WILMOT'S *dagger.*

Agn. The stranger sleeps at present; but so restless
His slumbers seem, they can't continue long.
Here, I've secured his dagger.
O. Wilm. O Agnes! Agnes! if there be a hell,
'Tis just we should expect it.
[*Goes to take the dagger, but lets it fall.*
Agn. Shake off this panic, and be more yourself!
O. Wilm. What's to be done? On what had we determined?
Agn. You're quite dismayed.
[*Takes up the dagger.*
O. Wilm. Give me the fatal steel.
'Tis but a single murder,
Necessity, impatience, and despair,
The three wide mouths of that true Cerberus,
Grim poverty, demand: they shall be stopped.
Ambition, persecution, and revenge,
Devour their millions daily: And shall I—
But follow me, and see how little cause
You had to think, there was the least remain
Of manhood, pity, mercy, or remorse,
Left in this savage breast.
[*Going the wrong way.*
Agn. Where do you go?
The street is that way.
O. Wilm. True! I had forgot.
Agn. Quite, quite confounded!
O. Wilm. Well, I recover.—I shall find the way. [*Exit.*
Agn. O softly! softly! The least noise undoes us.
What are we doing? Misery and want
Are lighter ills than this! I cannot bear it!—
Stop, hold thy hand!—Inconstant, wretched woman!
What! doth my heart recoil!——O Wilmot! Wilmot!
What power shall I invoke to aid thee, Wilmot?
[*Exit.*

Enter CHARLOTTE, EUSTACE, *and* RANDAL.

Char. What strange neglect! The doors are all unbarred,
And not a living creature to be seen!

Enter Old WILMOT *and* AGNES.

Char. Sir, we are come to give and to receive
A thousand greetings—Ha! what can this mean!
Why do you look with such amazement on us?
Are these your transports for your son's return?
Where is my Wilmot?—Has he not been here?
Would he defer your happiness so long,
Or could a habit so disguise your son,
That you refused to own him?

Agn. Heard you that?—
What prodigy of horror is disclosing,
To render murder venial!

O. Wilm. Prithee, peace!
The miserable damned suspend their howling,
And the swift orbs are fixed in deep attention.

Rand. What mean these dreadful words, and frantic air!
That is the dagger my young master wore.

Eust. My mind misgives me. Do not stand to gaze
On these dumb phantoms of despair and horror!
Let us search further; Randal, shew the way.
[*Exeunt.*

Agn. Let life forsake the earth, and light the sun,
And death and darkness bury in oblivion
Mankind and all their deeds; that no posterity
May ever rise to hear our horrid tale,
Or view the grave of such detested parricides!

O. Wilm. Curses and deprecations are in vain:
The sun will shine, and all things have their course,
When we, the curse and burden of the earth,
Shall be absorbed, and mingled with its dust.
Our guilt and desolation must be told,
From age to age, to teach desponding mortals,
How far beyond the reach of human thought
Heaven, when incensed, can punish—Die thou first. [*Stabs Agnes.*
I durst not trust thy weakness.

Agn. Ever kind,
But most in this!

O. Wilm. I will not long survive thee.

Agn. Do not accuse thy erring mother, Wilmot,
With too much rigour when we meet above!
To give thee life for life, and blood for blood,
Is not enough. Had I ten thousand lives,
I'd give them all to speak my penitence,
Deep, and sincere, and equal to my crime.
Oh Wilmot! oh my son! my son! [*Dies.*

Enter RANDAL *and* EUSTACE.

Eust. O Wilmot! Wilmot!
Are these the fruits of all thy anxious cares
For thy ungrateful parents?——Cruel fiends!

O. Wilm. What whining fool art thou, who would'st usurp
My sovereign right of grief!—Was he thy son?—
Say! Canst thou shew thy hands reeking with blood,
That flowed, through purer channels, from thy loins?
Compute the sands that bound the spacious ocean,
And swell their number with a single grain;
Increase the noise of thunder with thy voice;
Or, when the raging wind lays nature waste,
Assist the tempest with thy feeble breath;
But name not thy faint sorrow, with the anguish
Of a curst wretch, who only hopes from this
[*Stabbing himself.*
To change the scene, but not relieve his pain!

Rand. A dreadful instance of the last remorse!
May all your woes end here!

O. Wilm. O would they end
A thousand ages hence, I then should suffer
Much less than I deserve. Yet let me say,
You'll do but justice to inform the world,
This horrid deed, that punishes itself,
Was not intended, thinking him our son;
For that we knew not, 'till it was too late.
Proud, and impatient under our afflictions,
While Heaven was labouring to make us happy,
We brought this dreadful ruin on ourselves.
Mankind may learn——but——oh—— [*Dies.*

Rand. Heaven grant they may!
And may thy penitence atone thy crime!
'Tend well the hapless Charlotte, and hear hence
These bleeding victims of despair and pride;
Toll the death bell! and follow to the grave
The wretched parents and ill-fated son.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

ARDEN OF FEVERSHAM.

BY

LILLO.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

THE MAYOR OF FEVERSHAM.
ARDEN, *a gentleman of Feversham.*
FRANKLIN, *his friend.*
MICHAEL, *servant to Arden.*
GREEN, *enemy to Arden.*
MOSBY, *criminally attached to Alicia.*
BRADSHAW.
BLACK WILL, GEORGE SHAKEBAG, } *ruffians.*
LORD CHEYNEY.
ADAM FOWL, *an inn-keeper.*
A Servant to Arden.
Officers, &c.

WOMEN.

ALICIA, *wife to Arden.*
MARIA, *sister to Mosby.*

Scene—Feversham, in Kent.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The street before* ARDEN'S *door.*

Enter MOSBY.

Mos. THE morning's dark, and horrid as my purpose.
Thrice have my snares been laid for Arden's life,
And thrice hath he escaped. I am not safe:
The living may revenge. Oh! could I win
Alicia to conspire her husband's fall,
Then might I say, security, thou'rt mine,
And laugh at all to come. For other instruments,
There's Green: he bears him hard about this suit
For the abbey-lands, to which the hot youth pleads
Some fancied right. Michael, the trencher favourite,
A bastard, bred of Arden's charity,
He has been privy to our secret joys,
And, on that trust presuming, loves my sister—
Winks at adultery, and may at murder.
Maria is his price. I've placed her here,
Companion of my sweet Alicia's hours,
To spread her charms for ever in his eye:
To her are all my visits. But Alicia—
She must, she shall comply: when to my arms
Her honour she resigned, her fond reluctance whispered,
She could deny me nothing. This to try.
[*Exit into Arden's house.*

SCENE II.—*A chamber.*

Enter ARDEN *in his night-gown.*

Ard. Unhappy Arden, whither canst thou wander
To lay thy heavy load of sorrows down!
Will change of place relieve the afflicted mind,
Or does all nature yield a balm to cure
The pangs of slighted love and broken faith?
Ungrateful false Alicia! false with Mosby,

The vile dependent of my foe professed,
Lord Clifford's full-fed flatterer! O damned!
Come, Franklin, come: Arden, thy friend, invites thee;
And let me pour my griefs into thy bosom,
And find in friendship what I've lost in love.

Enter ALICIA.

Alic. Why, Arden, do you leave your bed thus early?
Have cold and darkness greater charms than I?
There was a time, when winter nights were short,
And Arden chid the morn, that called him from me.

Ard. This deep dissembling, this hypocrisy,
(The last worst state of a degenerate mind)
Speaks her in vice determined and mature. [*Aside.*

Alic. What maid, that knows man's variable nature,
Would sell her free estate for marriage bonds?
From vows and oaths, and every servile tye,
The tyrant man at pleasure is set free;
The holy nuptial bond leaves him at large;
Yet vests him with a power, that makes us slaves.
'Tis heavenly this—

Ard. To stop my just reproach,
Art thou the first to tax the marriage state?

Alic. Are you not jealous? do you not give ear
To vain surmises and malicious tongues,
That hourly wound my yet untainted fame?

Ard. And wouldst thou make me author of the shame,
Thy guilt has brought on us!—I'll bear no longer.
The traitor Mosby, cursed, detested Mosby,
Shall render an account for both your crimes.

Alic. What do I hear! [*Aside.*

Ard. The base mechanic slave
Shall answer with his blood.

Alic. O hear me speak!

Ard. No, I am deaf: As thou hast ever been
To fame, to virtue, and my just complaints.

Alic. Thus on my knees—

Ard. Adultress! dost thou kneel
And weep, and pray, and bend thy stubborn heart
(Stubborn to me) to sue for him? Away!
Away this instant, lest I kill thee too. [*Recovering himself.*
No—not the hell, thou hast kindled in this bosom,
Shall make me shed thy blood.

Alic. I do not hope it.

Ard. For me, be as immortal as thy shame.

Alic. I see your cruel purpose: I must live,
To see your hand and honour stained with blood,
Your ample fortune seized on by the state,
Your life a forfeit to the cruel laws.
O Arden, blend compassion with your rage,
And kindly kill me first!

Ard. Not for my sake
Are all thy tears; then had you felt them sooner;
Plead not the ruin you have made; but say,
Why have you driven me to these extremes?
Why sacrificed my peace, and your own fame,
By corresponding with a menial slave?

Alic. Thou canst not think, that I have wronged thy bed?

Ard. Would I could not!

Alic. By Heaven—

Ard. No perjuries.
But now, as you lay slumbering by my side,
I still awake, anxious and full of thought,
(For thou hast banished sleep from these sad eyes)
With gentle accents, thrilling with desire,
You called on Mosby. Love made me doubt my ears,
And question, if the dark and silent night
Conspired not with my fancy to deceive me:
But soon I lost the painful pleasing hope;
Again you called upon your minion Mosby.
Confirmed, I strove to fly your tainted bed,
But, wanting strength, sunk lifeless on my pillow.
You threw your eager arms about my neck,
You pressed my bloodless cheeks with your warm lips,
Which glowed, adultress! with infernal heat;
And called, a third time, on the villain Mosby.

Alic. A dream indeed, if I e'er called on him.

Ard. Thy guilty dreams betray thy waking thoughts.

Alic. I know I'm simple, thoughtless, and unguarded;
And what is carelessness you construe guilt.
Yet were I weak as those fantastic visions,
Sure I could never have condemned you, Arden,
On circumstances and an idle dream.

Ard. But such a dream!—

Alic. Yet was it but a dream,
Which, though I not remember, I abhor,
And mourn with tears, because it gives you pain.
Arden, you do not wish me innocent,
Or on suspicions could you doom me guilty?

Ard. Not wish thee innocent! do sinking mariners,
When struggling with the raging seas for life,
Wish the assistance of some friendly plank?
'Tis that, and that alone, can bring me comfort.

Alic. O jealousy! thou fierce remorseless fiend,
Degenerate, most unnatural child of love!
How shall I chase thee from my Arden's bosom?

Ard. There is a way, an easy way, Alicia.

Alic. O name it—speak.

Ard. What's past may be forgotten.
Your future conduct—

Alic. You distract me, Arden.
Say, how shall I convince you of my truth?

Ard. I ask but this: never see Mosby more! [*He starts.*
By Heaven, she's dumb!

Alic. O how shall I conceal
My own confusion, and elude his rage? [*Aside.*

Ard. Thou'rt lost, Alicia!—lost to me—and Heaven.

Alic. Indeed I'm lost, if you unkindly doubt me.

Ard. Wilt thou, then, ne'er converse with Mosby more?
Alic. If I e'er do, may Heaven, and you, forsake me!
Ard. You'll keep your word, Alicia! Prithee, say—
Alic. You'll break my heart.
Ard. I'd rather break my own.
Then thou art innocent, and lov'st me still?
Alic. And ever will.
Ard. Give me thy hand—thy heart!
O give me that!
Alic. That always was your own.
Ard. Thou flatterer—then whence this cruel strife?
Still art thou cold: nor warm are thy embraces,
Nor sparkle in thine eyes the fires of love:
Cold, cold, and comfortless.
Alic. Indeed you fright me.
Ard. 'Tis possible——
Alic. What?
Ard. That thou may'st yet deceive me.
Alic. O! I am wretched!
Ard. Both perhaps are so.
But, if thou ever lov'dst, thou'lt not despise me,
And wilt forgive me, if indeed I've wronged thee,
As I've forgiven thee—Pity, I'm sure, I need.
[*Exit Arden.*
Alic. Thou hast it, Arden, even from her, that wrongs thee.
All, all shall pity thee, and curse Alicia.
Can I feel this, and further tempt the stream
Of guilty love! O whither am I fallen!

Enter MARIA.

Mar. An happy day, Alicia; and may each morn
Of coming life be ushered with like joy.
Franklin, from court returned, has brought the grant
Of the abbey-lands, confirmed by the young king,
To Arden for his life: nor will deliver,
But to himself, the deed.
Alic. A worthy friend!
The grant is not more welcome to my husband,
Than Franklin's company.
Mar. He's flown to meet him.

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Madam, your brother Mosby—
Alic. Where is Mosby?
Serv. He waits below.
Alic. O haste, and lead me to him!
Serv. Madam, he but desires to see his sister.
Alic. His sister! what! did he not ask for me?
Mar. Perhaps——
Alic. Pray, give me leave—looks he in health?
Serv. He seems in health.
Alic. Here, and not ask for me!
Seems he or angry then, or melancholy?
Answer me, stock, stone.
Serv. Truly I can't say.
Alic. Thou canst say nothing.—Get thee from my sight!
Yet stay—no matter. I'll myself go seek him.
[*Exeunt Alicia and Servant.*
Mar. Where reason is, can passion thus prevail? [*Exit Maria.*

SCENE III.—*A parlour in* ARDEN'S *house.*

Enter ALICIA, *meeting* MOSBY.

Alic. Mosby, that brow befits our wayward fate.
The evil hour, long feared, is fallen upon us,
And we shall sink beneath it. Do not frown—
If you're unkind, to whom shall I complain?
Mos. Madam, it was my sister I expected.
Alic. Am I forgotten then? Ungrateful man!
This only could have added to my woes.
Did you but know what I have borne for you,
You would not thus, unmoved, behold my tears.
Mos. Madam, you make me vain.
Alic. Insult not, Mosby:
You were the first dear object of my love;
And could my heart have made a second choice,
I had not been the object of your scorn:
But duty, gratitude, the love of fame,
And pride of virtue, were too weak to erase
The deep impression of our early vows.
Mos. Therefore you kindly chose to wed another.
Alic. Reproach me not with what I deemed my duty.
Oh! had I thought I could assume the name,
And never know the affection of a wife,
I would have died ere given my hand to Arden.
Mos. You gave him all.——
Alic. No, no, I gave him nothing:
Words without truth—an hand without a heart!
But he has found the fraud; the slumbering lion
At length hath roused himself.
Mos. And I must fall
The victim———
Alic. No; he knows not yet his wrongs.
Mos. But quickly will.
Alic. That, that's my greatest fear.
Mos. Then, branded with a strumpet's hated name,
The cause abhorred of shame, of blood, and ruin,
Thou'lt be exposed, and hooted through the world!
Alic. O hide the dreadful image from my view!
Chaste matrons, modest maids, and virtuous wives,
Scorning a weakness which they never knew,
Shall blush, with indignation, at my name!
Mos. My death—but that, though certain—
Alic. Labour not
To drive me to despair. Fain would I hope—
Mos. You may, and be deceived. For me, I know
My fate resolved—and thee the instrument,
The willing instrument, of Mosby's ruin!
Inconstant, false Alicia!

Alic. False indeed,
But not to thee, cruel, injurious Mosby!
Mos. Injurious! false one! might not all these dangers,
That threaten to involve us both in ruin,
Ere this have been prevented?
Alic. Ha! say on.
Mos. And, not preventing, art not thou the cause?
Alic. Ah! whither, Mosby, whither wouldst thou drive me?
Mos. Nay, didst thou love, or wouldst secure thy fame,
Preserve my life, and bind me yours for ever—
'Tis yet within your power.
Alic. By Arden's death!
Meanest thou not so? Speak out, and be a devil.
Mos. Yes, 'tis for thee I am so. But your looks
Declare, my death would please you better, madam!
Alic. Exaggerating fiend! be dumb for ever!
His death! I must not cast a glance that way.
Mos. Is there another way? O think, Alicia!
Alic. I will, for that will make me mad: And madness
Were some excuse. Come, kind distraction! come,
And Arden dies! My husband dies for Mosby!
[*Shrieks, and runs to Mosby.*

Enter ARDEN *and* FRANKLIN.

He's here! O save me! tell me, did he hear?
Ard. [*Starting.*] Franklin, support your friend! I shake with horror!
Frank. What moves you thus?
Ard. See!—Mosby with my wife!
Mos. But, madam, I shall spare your farther trouble;
In happy time behold my neighbour here!
[*As taking leave of Alicia.*
Alic. Mischief and wild confusion have begun,
And desolation waits to close the scene!
[*Exit Alicia.*
Mos. Sir, I would gladly know, whether your grant,
Of the rich abbey-lands of Feversham,
Be yet confirmed or not?
Ard. What if I tear
Her faithless heart, even in the traitor's sight,
Who taught it falsehood! [*Aside.*
Frank. He is lost in thought.
But I can answer that: It is confirmed.
I brought the deed, with the great seal annexed,
Signed by our pious Edward, and his council.
Mos. I'm satisfied.
Ard. So am not I. By hell,
There's justice in the thought!—I'm strangely tempted. [*Aside.*
Mos. My friend seems wrapt in thought.—I came to advise him,
That Green, by virtue of a former grant
His father long enjoyed———
Ard. For my estate,
The law, and this good seal, is my security;
To them I leave Green, and his groundless claim.
But my just right to false Alicia's heart
(So dearly purchased with a husband's name,
And sacred honour of a gentleman),
I shall assert myself, and thus secure
From further violation. [*Draws.*
Mos. Her known virtue
Renders the injury, your fancy forms,
A thing of air.
Frank. Impossible to thought!
Whence, Arden, comes this sudden madness on thee,
That your Alicia, ever dear esteemed,
And deeply loved——
Ard. Out on the vile adultress!
But thou, demure, insinuating slave,
Shalt taste my vengeance first. Defend thyself!
Mos. I scorn to take advantage of your rage.
Ard. A coward too! O my consummate shame!
Mos. This I can bear from you.
Ard. Or any man!
Why hangs that useless weapon by thy side,
Thou shame to manhood? Draw! Will nothing move thee! [*Strikes him.*
Frank. Hold! Whither would your mad revenge transport you?
Ard. Shall shameful cowardice protect a villain?
Mos. You chuse a proper place to shew your courage!
Ard. Go on. I'll follow to the ocean's brink,
Or to the edge of some dread precipice,
Where terror and despair shall stop thy flight,
And force thy trembling hand to guard thy life!
Mos. What I endure to save a lady's honour!
[*To Frank.*
Frank. Your longer stay will but incense him more;
Pray quit the house.
Mos. Sir, I shall take your counsel.
[*Exit Mosby.*
Ard. He hath escaped me then. But for my wife—
Frank. What has she done?
Ard. Done! must I tell my shame?
Away! begone! lest, from my prey withheld,
I turn, and tear the officious hand, that lets me—
Soft! art thou Franklin? Pardon me, sweet friend———
My spirits fail——I shake——I must retire.
Frank. To your Alicia.
Ard. To my lonely couch;
For I must learn to live without her, Franklin.
Frank. Pray Heaven forbid!
Ard. To hate her, to forget her, if I can:
No easy task for one, who doats like me.
From what an height I'm fallen! Once smiling love
Of all its horrors robbed the blackest night,
And gilt with gladness every ray of light;
Now, tyrant-like, his conquest he maintains,
And o'er his groaning slave with rods of iron reigns! [*Exeunt*

ACT. II.

SCENE I.—*The Street.*

Enter GREEN *and* MOSBY.

Green. You pity me, and know not my estate.
I'm ruined, Mosby; thoughtless, and ill-advised,
My riotous youth will leave my age a beggar.
These abbey-lands were all the hopes I'd left;
My whole support.
Mos. Base and ungenerous Arden,
To force a man, born equal to himself,
To beg, or starve!
Green. By Heaven, I will do neither:
I'll let the proud oppressor know——
Mos. How blind is rage!
Who threats his enemy, lends him a sword
To guard himself.
Green. Robbed of the means of life,
What's life itself?—an useless load, a curse!
Which yet I'll dearly sell to my revenge!
Mos. You mean to kill him, then?
Green. I do, by Heaven!
Mos. Suppose you fail.
Green. I can but lose my life.
Mos. Then where is your revenge, when he, secure,
Riots, unbounded, in his ill-got wealth?
Green. What can I do?
Mos. 'Tis plain you wish him dead.
Green. Each moment of his life is to my soul
A tedious age of pain; for, while he lives,
Contempt, and all the ills a lazar knows,
Must be my wretched lot, and lengthen out
The miserable hours. What grovelling wretch
Would wish to hold his life on such conditions?
Mos. But change the scene: suppose but Arden dead,
Your land restored, and fortune in your power;
Honour, respect, and all the dear delights,
That wait on wealth, shall wing the joyful hours,
And life contracted seem one happy day.
I hate this Arden, and have stronger motives
Than any you can urge to wish his death.
He has accused, insulted, struck me!
Nay, his fair virtuous wife, on my account——
Green. If fame speaks true, you're to be envied there.
Mos. The world will talk; but be that as it may:
I want not cause nor will, not means nor friends——
Green. Nor opportunity shall long be wanting.
Mos. Enough: his fate is fixed. See! Bradshaw's here!

Enter BRADSHAW.

Brad. Save, save you, gentlemen!
Mos. We thank you, neighbour.
But whither in such haste?
Brad. To the isle of Shippey,
To wait on good lord Cheyney. As he holds
In high esteem our worthy townsman, Arden,
I shall first call on him. 'Tis well I met you,
For yonder two were but bad road-companions.
Green. They seem of desperate fortunes.
Mos. Have they names?
Brad. One I know not; but judge him from his comrade.
The foremost of the two I knew at Boulogne,
Where, in the late king's reign, I served myself.
He was a corporal then; but such a villain—
Beneath a soldier's name; a common cut-throat,
That preys on all mankind, and knows no party.
Mos. An horrid character you give him, Bradshaw.
Brad. No worse than he deserves.
Mos. [*Aside.*] An useful hint:
He shall not want employment: What's his name?
Brad. Black Will. His family-name I never heard.
Mos. [To *Green.*] A word—write you a letter to Alicia:
Disguise your hand. This honest fool may bear it.
Hint at these men. In case her courage fail,
She will be glad to shift the deed on them.
Green. I am instructed.

Enter BLACK WILL *and* SHAKEBAG.

B. Will. What! comrade Bradshaw! How fare you, man? S'blood! dost not remember honest Black Will? Why, thou art grown purse-proud sure.
Brad. Why, you're not easily forgotten, Will. But, prithee, what brings thee to Feversham?
B. Will. A soldier, you know, is at home, wherever he comes. *Omne solum forti patria!* There's Latin—Give's a tester.
Brad. In time of peace, we should apply to some honest creditable business, and not turn the name of soldier into vagabond.
B. Will. Yes, as you have done. I'm told you keep a goldsmith's shop here in Feversham, and, like a mechanical rogue, live by cheating. I have more honour.
Brad. Would thou hadst honesty.
B. Will. Where do our honesties differ? I take a purse behind a hedge, and you behind a counter.
Brad. Insolent slave!
B. Will. You *cent. per cent.* rascal! I may find a time to teach you better manners.
Brad. Go, mend thy own.
B. Will. Thou wert always a sneaking fellow, Bradshaw, and couldst never swear, nor get drunk. Come, shall I and my comrade Shakebag taste your ale?

Brad. My house entertains no such guests—Farewell, gentlemen.

Mos. Along with Bradshaw,
And leave the management of these to me.
[*Aside to Green.*

Green. It shall be done. Bradshaw, a word with thee.

Brad. Your pardon, gentlemen.
[*Exeunt Green and Bradshaw.*

B. Will. He was a cadet in the last French war, like other soldiers, then; but now he has got a nest, and feathered it a little, he pretends to reputation. S'blood! had this been a fit place, he had not escaped me so. You have surveyed us well. [*To Mosby.*] How do you like us?

Mos. Methinks I read truth, prudence, secrecy,
And courage, writ upon your manly brows.

B. Will. What hellish villainy has this fellow in hand, that makes him fawn upon us? [*Aside.*

Mos. I fear the world's a stranger to your merit.
If this may recommend me to your friendship—
[*Gives a purse.*

B. Will. Of what damned deed is this to be the wages?

Shake. Hast ever an elder brother's throat to cut?

B. Will. Or an old peevish father to be buried?

Mos. Neither of these.

Shake. A rival then mayhap——

Mos. There you come nearer to me.

Shake. Then speak out.
We're honest, sir.

B. Will. Trusty, and very poor.

Mos. Metal too fit for me. [*Aside.*] Then hear me, sirs.
But you must both, ere I disclose my purpose,
Promise, and bind that promise by your oaths—
Never—[*They both laugh.*] Why this unseasonable mirth?

B. Will. You'd have us swear?——

Mos. Else why did I propose it?

B. Will. There's the jest. Are men, who act in despite of all law, honour, and conscience; who live by blood (as it is plain you think we do) are we free-thinkers, like silly wenches and canting priests, to be confined by oaths?

Shake. Would you bind us, let the price equal the purchase, and we'll go to hell for you with pleasure.

Mos. Horrid! they shake even me, who would employ them. [*Aside.*
I apprehend—The business then is this:
In Feversham their lives a man, called Arden;
In general esteem, and ample means;
And has a wife, the very pride of nature.
I have been happy long in her affections,
And, he once dead, might with her share his fortunes.
He's jealous too of late, and threatens me.
Love, interest, self-defence, all ask his death.—

B. Will. This man you'd have dispatched?

Mos. I would.

B. Will. Rich, say you?

Mos. Immensely so.

B. Will. And much beloved?

Mos. By all degrees of men.

B. Will. George! this will be a dangerous piece of work.

Shake. Damned dangerous. A man so known; and his reputation too.

B. Will. And then the power and number of his friends must be considered.

Mos. What! does your courage shrink already, sirs?

Shake. No.

B. Will. This is ever the curse of your men of true valour; to be the tools of crafty cowardly knaves, who have not the heart to execute what their heads have projected. It is a damned ungrateful world—What money have you more about you?

Mos. Ten pieces.

B. Will. I've had as much for stealing a dog.

Mos. I give you that as a retaining fee:
When the deed's done, each shall have twice that sum,
And a good horse to further his escape.

B. Will. Sir, will you have him murdered in a church?

Shake. Or on the altar; say the word, and it shall be done.

Mos. Some safer place, the street, highway, or fields,
Will serve my turn as well.

Shake. Just as you please.

Mos. Where may I find you, gentlemen?

B. Will. At Adam Fowl's, the Flower-de-luce.

Mos. I have confederates in this design;
When we have contrived the manner of his death,
I'll send you word.

B. Will. You'll find us always ready.

Mos. And determined?

B. Will. Ay, fear it not. Farewell.
[*Exeunt several ways.*

SCENE III.—*A Room in Arden's house.*

Enter ALICIA, *with a letter.*

Alic. He doubts me; yet he dares not tell me so,
But thus, by Green, whets my unsettled mind.
[*Reads.*
'Strike home, or not at all. In case you fail,
'We have found instruments by means of Bradshaw.'
He shall not find me undetermined now.
Hark! Michael's on the watch. If Arden sleeps,
(For so he seemed disposed,) he'll bring me word.
That, that's the safest time. This promised marriage
With Mosby's sister has removed his qualms.

Enter MICHAEL.

Why dost thou break upon me unawares?
What of your master?
Mich. He's scarce sunk to rest,
But full of meditated rage against Mosby.
Alic. He'll sleep in peace ere long.——
Mich. Think not on that.
O did Maria bless me with her smiles,
As you do Mosby, had I twenty lives,
I'd risk them all to win her to my arms.
Alic. I prithee leave me, Michael. [*Exit Michael.*] What is nature!
There is a power in love, subdues to itself
All other passions in the human mind.
This wretch, more fearful than the lonely murderer,
Whom with inquiring eyes some stranger views,
Would meet the king of terrors undismayed,
For her he loves, and dare him to the combat.
And shall not I preserve my Mosby's life?
And shall not I—A husband!—What's a husband?
I have a soul above the unnatural tie,
That tells me, I'm his right, and only his,
Who won my virgin heart. Ye tender parents,
Whose cruel kindness made your child thus wretched,
Turn not your eyes towards earth to view this scene;
'Twill make you sad in Heaven! [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*Another Room.* ARDEN *sleeping on a couch.*

Enter ALICIA, *with a dagger in her hand.*

Alic. See! Jealousy, o'erwatched, is sunk to rest,
While fearful guilt knows no security,
But in repeated crimes. My weary eyes,
Each moment apprehensive of his vengeance,
Must seek for rest in vain till his are closed.
Then for our mutual peace, and Mosby's love.
[*Approaching to stab him, starts.*
He wakes—Defend me from his just revenge!
And yet he sees me not, nor moves a finger,
To save his threatened life. Then whence that voice
That pierced my ears, and cried, 'Alicia, hold!'
Can mimic fancy cheat the outward sense,
And form such sounds? If these heart-racking thoughts
Precede the horrid act, what must ensue?
Worse plague I cannot fear from Arden's death;
But from his life—the death of him I love.
Perish the hated husband! Wherefore hated?
Is he not all, that my vain sex could wish?
My eyes, while they survey his graceful form,
Condemn my heart, and wonder how it strayed.
He sighs; he starts; he groans. His body sleeps,
But restless grief denies his mind repose.
Perhaps he dreams of me; perhaps he sees me,
Thus like a fury, broke from deepest hell,
Lust in my heart, and murder in my hand——
[*Alicia drops the dagger.* ARDEN *starts up.*
Ard. Her dagger, Michael—seize it, and I'm safe.
How strong she is! Oh! What a fearful dream!
Before me still! speak, vision—art thou Alicia,
Or but the coinage of my troubled brain?
Alic. O Arden—husband—lord—
Ard. Art thou my wife?
Thou'rt substance——I am wrapped in wonder—hence——
Hast lost all sense of fear, as well as shame,
That thou dar'st haunt me thus, asleep and waking,
Thou idol, and thou torment of my soul?
Alic. My bleeding heart!
Ard. Away! begone and leave me!
Lest, in the transports of unbounded rage,
I rush upon thee, and deface these charms,
That first enslaved my soul; mangle that face,
Where, spite of falsehood, beauty triumphs still;
Mar that fair frame, and crush thee into atoms.
Avoid me, and be safe—Nay now you drive me hence. [*Alicia kneels, he turns away.*
Cruel and false as thou hast been to me,
I cannot see thee wring thy suppliant hands,
And weep, and kneel in vain. [*Exit Arden.*
Alic. This, this is he
I came prepared to murder. Curst Alicia!
[*Takes up the dagger.*
In thy own bosom plunge the fatal steel,
Or his, who robbed thee of thy fame and virtue.
It will not be—Fear holds my dastard hand:
Those chaster powers, that guard the nuptial bed
From foul pollution, and the hand from blood,
Have left their charge, and I am lost for ever.
[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A road or highway near Feversham.*

BLACK WILL *and* SHAKEBAG.

Shake. Damnation! posted as you were, to let him escape!
B. Will. I pray thee, peace.
Shake. Green and I beheld him pass carelessly by within reach of your dagger. If you had held it but naked in your hand, he would have stabbed himself as he walked.
B. Will. I had not power to do it: a sudden damp came over me; I never felt so in my life. A kind of palsy seized me.
Shake. Palsy! when you're upon your duty! Go, go and sleep, or drink away your fears. You tremble still

B. Will. I tremble! my courage was never yet called in question, villain. When I fought at Boulogne under the late king, both armies knew, and feared me.

Shake. That might be, because they did not know you. Dog, I'll shake you off to your old trade of filching in a throng—Murder's too genteel a business for your capacity.—Sirrah, I have taken more gold at noon-day, than ever you filched copper by candle-light.

B. Will. Cowardly slave, you lye.

Shake. A coward! S'blood! that shall be proved. Come on.

B. Will. To thy heart's blood.

Shake. To thine. [*They fight.*

Enter GREEN.

Green. What are you mad! For shame! put up your swords,

Shake. Not till I've had his life.

B. Will. Fool, guard thy own.

Green. Pray hear me, gentlemen!

B. Will. Stand farther off!

Shake. Away!

Green. This broil will ruin all.

Shake. He begun it.

B. Will. Ay, and will end it too.

Green. Arden, you know, returns, and will you let him
Escape a second time?

Shake. Who did the first?

Green. No matter, that may be repaired.

B. Will. Brand me with cowardice!

Green. Come, come, you're both to blame. Speak, will you lay aside this senseless broil?

B. Will. Nay, let him speak.

Shake. Why, rather than lose this opportunity— [*Puts up his sword.*

B. Will. Ay—We'll defer it, 'till Arden's dead. I'm for doing business first, and then for play.

Shake. Challenge me, when thou darest.

Green. The night draws on. Are you resolved?

Shake. We are.

Green. Enough.—See where he comes. I must withdraw;
But when you've done the deed, and sent his soul
No matter where—I'll come to you again. [*Exit Green.*

B. Will. Something rises in my throat—I can scarce breathe—I'd rather poison half a dozen cardinals, than kill this honest man, but—I'll do't, for my reputation.

Shake. He comes. Retire a little. Let him advance, then bury your dagger in his heart. If you fail, I'll second you.

B. Will. Stand further off, I shall not need your aid.

Shake. Now strike—

Enter ARDEN *first, and then Lord* CHEYNEY *attended.*

B. Will. Again prevented! Ten thousand devils take them all!

L. Chey. Arden, well met. You're to the isle of Shippey
Grown quite a stranger. Shall we see you there?

Ard. I purposed soon to have waited on your lordship.

L. Chey. Well, will you sup with me to night at Shorlow?

Ard. Franklin, my lord, who is my guest at present,
Expects me at my house.

L. Chey. Then will you dine with me to morrow?

Ard. I'll not fail your lordship.

L. Chey. Believe me, worthy friend, I'm glad to see you.
Walk you towards Feversham?

Ard. So please your lordship.

[*Exeunt Lord Cheyney, and Arden.*

B. Will. Just as I'd taken aim too!—S'blood, I could kill myself for vexation,

Enter GREEN.

Green. Well, Arden is at last dispatched?

Shake. Yes, safe to Feversham.

Green. Safe, say you! his good fortune mocks us all.
These strange escapes have almost staggered me;
But thinking of my wrongs, I'm more confirmed.

B. Will. Well said, my man of resolution! A gentleman commits a murder with double the satisfaction for such a heart.—We must lay our snares more cunning for the future.

Green. We should consult with Michael, Arden's man;
The pigmy-hearted wretch, though long ago
He swore his master dead, acts with reluctance.

Shake. The coward must be spurred.—He does it, or he dies.

Green. I wonder at his absence, as he knew
Of this attempt, and promised to be here.

Enter MICHAEL.

Mich. I saw my master and lord Cheyney pass.
And my heart leaped for joy. [*Apart.*

B. Will. What says the villain?

Mich. Would I were gone. [*Aside.*] Sir, if I give offence— [*Going.*

Green. Michael, come back; you must not leave us so.

Mich. What is your pleasure?

Green. Why, we understand
You are in love with Mosby's beauteous sister.

Mich. Suppose I am?

B. Will. You deal too mildly with the peasant. You swore to kill your master, villain. Be an honest man of your word, and do it then, white-liver!

Mich. Sir, I repented.

B. Will. Repented! what's that? Dog, know your rank, and act as we command, or your heart's blood——

Mich. What must I do? [*Frighted*

B. Will. Do! you must shew us the house, appoint the time and place, and lure your master thither—We'll take care of him, without your trouble.

Green. So shall you purchase noble Mosby's friendship,
And, by his friendship, gain his sister's love.

Mich. They'll murder me too, should I not comply—— [*Aside.*

Green. Think on your love, your interest.

B. Will. Or your death.

Mich. To-night, soon as the abbey-clock strikes ten, [*Trembling.*
Come to his house: I'll leave the doors unbarred:
The left hand stairs lead to my master's chamber;
There take him, and dispose him as you please.

Green. This cannot fail.

Shake. Unless this love-sick coward thinks to deceive us.

Mich. I will not, by Heaven!

B. Will. I believe thee; for by hell thou darest not. [*Exeunt.*

Mich. Master, thy constant love and daily bounty
Deserve more grateful offices from Michael.
[*Exit weeping.*

SCENE II.

A room in ARDEN's *house.*

ALICIA *alone.*

Alic. When vice has spread her poison through the soul,
How lifeless, slow, confused, and insincere
Are our resolves in the pursuit of virtue!
What wonder, then, Heaven should refuse its aid
To thoughts that only blossom for a time,
Look blooming to the eye, but yield no fruit?

Enter MOSBY.

Mos. I come, Alicia, to partake thy griefs;
For fire divided burns with lesser force.

Alic. I know thee: thou art come to fan the flame
Thy breath hath kindled here, till it consume us.
But tears and sighs shall stifle in my heart
The guilty passion——

Mos. ——Is heroic love,
That formed the bright examples of thy sex,
Made their lives glorious, and their fame immortal,
A crime in thee? Art thou not mine by oaths,
By mutual sufferings, by contract mine?

Alic. Why do you urge a rash, a fatal promise,
I had no right to make, or you to ask?
Why did you practise on my easy heart?
Why did I ever listen to your vows?
In me, 'twas foolish guilt and disobedience;
In you, 'twas avarice, insolence, and pride.

Mos. 'Twas love in me, and gratitude in you.

Alic. 'Twas insolence in you, meanness in me,
And madness in us both. My careful parents,
In scorn of your presumption and my weakness,
Gave me in marriage to a worthy gentleman,
Of birth and fortune equal to my own.
Three years I lived with him without reproach,
And made him in that time the happy father
Of two most lovely children. I too was happy;
At least I lived in hopes I might be so:
For time, and gratitude, and Arden's love,
I hoped might quench my guilty flame for you,
And make my heart a present worthy him.

Mos. And dost thou glory in thy perjuries?
In love, inconstancy alone is a crime.
Think on the ardour of our youthful passion;
Think how we played with love; nor thought it guilt,
Till thy first falsehood; call it not obedience!
Thy marriage with this Arden made me desperate;
Think on the transports of our love renewed,
And——

Alic. Hide the rest, lest listening winds should hear,
And publish to the world our shameful tale!
Here let remembrance of our follies die.

Mos. Shall our loves wither in their early bloom?

Alic. Their harvest else will be to both our shames.
Hast thou not made a monster of me, Mosby?
You should abhor me, I abhor myself.
When unperceived I stole on Arden's sleep,
(Hell steeled my heart, and death was in my hand,)
Pale anguish brooded on his ashy cheek,
And chilly sweats stood shivering on his brow.
Relentless murder, at a sight so sad,
Gave place to pity; and as he waked, I stood
Irresolute, and drowned in tears.

Mos. She's lost,
And I in vain have stained my soul with blood.
[*Aside.*

Alic. Give o'er in time: in vain are your attempts
Upon my Arden's life; for Heaven, that wrested
The fatal weapon from my trembling hand,
Still has him in its charge.

Mos. Little she thinks, [*Aside.*
That Arden's dead ere now.—It must be so;
I've but that game to play, ere it be known.

Alic. I know our dangerous state; I hesitate;
I tremble for your life; I dread reproach;
But we've offended, and must learn to suffer.

Mos. Then Arden lives, in his Alicia blest,
And Mosby wretched! Yet should chance or nature
Lay Arden gently in a peaceful grave,
Might I presume to hope? Alicia, speak.

Alic. How shall I look into my secret thoughts,

And answer what I fear to ask myself?
[*A long pause.*
Mos. Silence speaks best for me. His death once known,
I must forswear the fact, and give these tools
To public justice, and not live in fear. [*Aside.*
Thy heart is mine. I ask but for my own.
[*To her.*
Truth, gratitude, and honour bind you to me,
Or else you never loved.
Alic. Then why this struggle?
Not loved! O had my love been justly placed,
As sure it was exalted and sincere,
I should have gloried in it, and been happy.
But I'll no longer live the abject slave
Of loose desire; I disclaim the thought.
Mos. I'll ask no more what honour should deny;
By Heaven, I never will.
Alic. Well then remember,
On that condition only, I renew
My vows. If time and the event of things
[*Giving her hand.*
Should ever make it lawful, I'll be yours.
Mos. Oh my full joys!——
Alic. Suppress thy frantic transports!
My heart recoils; I am betrayed! O give me back
My promised faith!
Mos. First, let the world dissolve.
Alic. There is no joy, nor peace for you, or me:
All our engagements cannot but be fatal.
Mos. The time may come, when you'll have other thoughts;
'Till then, farewell.—[*Aside.*] Now, fortune, do thy worst. [*Exit.*
Alic. Mosby, return——He's gone, and I am wretched.
I should have banished him my sight for ever.
You happy fair ones, whose untainted fame
Has never yet been blasted with reproach,
Fly from the appearance of dishonour far.
Virtue is arbitrary, nor admits debate:
To doubt is treason in her rigid court;
But, if ye parley with the foe, you're lost. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Another room in Arden's house.*

ARDEN *and* FRANKLIN *sitting together on a couch:* ARDEN *thoughtful.*

Frank. Nay, wonder not. Though every circumstance
Thus strangely met to prove the lady false,
And justify the husband's horrid vengeance,
Yet it appears to every honest eye,
Too late for the poor lady, she was wronged.
Ard. Is it possible?
Frank. Ay very possible:
He lives, that proves it so. Concealed from justice,
He pines with ceaseless sorrow for his guilt,
And each hour bends him lower towards his grave.
Ard. I know thy friendship, and perceive its drift.
I'll bear my wrongs, for sure I have been wronged.
Do I but think so then! What fools are men,
Whom love and hatred, anger, hope, and fear,
And all the various passions, rule by turns,
And in their several turns alike deceive?
Frank. To cast away, and on suspicion only,
A jewel, like Alicia, were to her
Unjust, and cruel to yourself. [*Clock strikes ten.*] Good night,
The clock has strucken ten.
Ard. I thought it more.
Frank. I thought it not so much.
Ard. Why, thus it is:
Our happy hours are few, and fly so swift,
That they are past ere we begin to count them:
But, when with pain and misery opprest,
Anticipating Time's unvarying pace,
We think each heavy moment is an age.
Frank. Come, let us to rest. Impartial as the grave,
Sleep robs the cruel tyrant of his power,
Gives rest and freedom to the o'erwrought slave,
And steals the wretched beggar from his wants.
Droop not, my friend; sleep will suspend thy cares,
And time will end them.
Ard. True, for time brings death,
The only certain end of human woes.
Sleep interrupts, but, waking, we're restored
To all our griefs again. Watching and rest,
Alternately succeeding one another,
Are all the idle business of dull life.
What shall we call this undetermined state,
This narrow isthmus 'twixt two boundless oceans,
That, whence we came, and that, to which we tend?
Is it life chequered with the sleep of death?
Or death enlivened by our waking dreams?
But we'll to bed. Here, Michael, bring the lights!

Enter MICHAEL *with lights.*

Heaven send you good repose.
[*Gives Franklin a candle.*
Frank. The like to you.
Mich. Shall I attend you, sir?
Frank. No, no, I choose to be alone. Good night.
[*Exit Franklin. Michael attends his master with the other light, and returns.*]
Mich. I, who should take my weapon in my hand,
And guard his life with hazard of my own,
With fraudful smiles have led him, unsuspecting,
Quite to the jaws of death. But I've an oath.
Mosby has bound me with an horrid vow,
Which if I break, these dogs have sworn my death.
I've left the doors unbarred. Hark! 'twas the latch.

They come—I hear their oaths, and see their daggers
Insulting o'er my master's mangled body,
While he for mercy pleads.—Good master, live!
I'll bar the doors again. But should I meet them—
What's that?—I heard them cry, 'Where is this 'coward?'
Arden once dead, they'll murder me for sport.
Help—call the neighbours—Master—Franklin—help!

Enter ARDEN *and* FRANKLIN, *undressed at several doors.*

Ard. What dismal outcry is this?
Frank. What frights thee, Michael?
Mich. My master!—Franklin!
Ard. Why dost thou tremble so?
Mich. I dreamed the house was full of thieves and murderers. [*Trembling.*
Ard. Dreamed! what, awake! Are all the doors made fast?
Mich. I think they are.
Ard. I'll go and see myself. [*Exit Arden.*
Frank. You made a fearful noise.
Mich. Did I?——
Ard. [*within.*] Why, Michael!
Frank. You tremble still.—Has any one been here?
Mich. No, I hope not. My master will be angry.

Enter ARDEN.

Ard. This negligence not half contents me, sir:
The doors were all left open.
Mich. Sir——
Ard. To bed,
And, as you prize my favour, be more careful.
[*Exit Michael.*
Frank. 'Tis very cold. Once more, my friend—
Ard. Good night. [*Exit Arden.*

SCENE IV.—*Changes to the street before Arden's door; the door shut.*

Enter BLACK WILL, *and* SHAKEBAG.

B. Will. Zounds! Michael has betrayed us;
The doors are fast. Away, away—Disperse.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*An Inn, the Flower-de-Luce.*

MOSBY *and* MICHAEL.

Mich. Though I with oaths appealed to conscious Heaven,
That Arden rose, and shut the doors himself,
Yet, but for Green, these bloody rogues had killed me.
We must desist—Franklin and sweet Maria
Have promised, at Alicia's own request,
To interfere.
Mos. Such ever be the employ
Of him I hate!
Mich. The mourning fair, all changed,
By me conjures you (and with tears she spake it),
Not to involve yourself, and her, in ruin,
By seeking to renew a correspondence,
She has renounced for ever.
Mos. How! confusion!
Mich. And hopes, as Heaven, in answer to her prayers,
Hath reconciled her duty and affection,
You will approve her resolution——
Mos. Doubtless!
Mich. And learn, by her example, to subdue
Your guilty passion.
Mos. Ha, ha, ha! exquisite woman!
So! rather than not change, she'll love her husband!
But she will not persevere.
Mich. Yes, sure she will.
Mos. Have I, then, slighted her whole sighing sex,
Bid opportunity and fortune wait;
And all to be forsaken for a husband!
By Heaven, I am glad he has so oft escaped,
That I may have him murdered in her sight!

Enter GREEN.

Green. How strange a providence attends this man!
'Tis vain to strive with Heaven.—Let's give it o'er.
Mos. No; when I do, may I be curst for ever,
Hopeless to love, and hate without revenge!
May I ne'er know an end of disappointment,
But, prest with hard necessity, like thee,
Live the contempt of my insulting foe!
Green. I scorn the abject thought. Had he a life
Hung on each hair, he dies!—If we succeed,
[*To Michael.*
This very night Maria shall be thine.
Mich. I am a man again.
Mos. I've thought a way,
That may be easy under friendship's mask,
Which to a foe suspected may be hard.
Green. Friendship! impossible.
Mos. You know him not.
You, with your ruffians, in the street shall seek him.
I follow at some distance. They begin
(No matter how) a quarrel, and at once
Assault him with their swords.—Straight I appear,
Forget all wrongs, and draw in his defence;

Mark me, be sure, with some slight wound; then fly,
And leave the rest to me.
Mich. I know his temper.
This seeming benefit will cancel all
His former doubts, and gain his easy heart.
Green. Perhaps so—yet——
Mos. Further debates are needless. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A room in* ARDEN'S *house.*

Enter FRANKLIN *and* MARIA.

Frank. Well, in what temper did you find Alicia?
Mar. Never was anguish, never grief, like hers:
She eats, nor sleeps. Her lovely downcast eyes,
That used to gladden each beholder's heart,
Now wash the flinty bosom of the earth.
Her troubled breast heaves with incessant sighs,
Which drink the purple streams of life, and blast
Her bloom, as storms the blossoms of the spring.
But sure her prayers must quickly reach high Heaven,
Relenting Arden kindly soothe her sorrows,
And her lost peace restore.
Frank. Their mutual peace, Maria!
For his can ne'er be found but in Alicia.
Ashamed to view the face of man or day,
As Mosby's name was written on his brow,
He cheerless wanders; seeks the darkest gloom,
To hide his drooping head, and grieves alone.
With a full heart, swoln eyes, and faltering tongue,
He sometimes, seeking to beguile his grief,
Begins a mournful tale: But straight a thought
Of his imagined wrongs, crossing his memory,
Ends his sad story, ere the half be told.
O may our pains, with wished success, be crowned!

Enter ARDEN.

Ard. No, Franklin, no; your friendly cares are vain:
Were I but certain she had wronged my bed,
I then might hate her, and shake off my woes;
But thus perplexed, can never taste of comfort!
Frank. O Jealousy! thou bane of social joys!
Oh! she's a monster, made of contradictions!
Let truth, in all her native charms, appear,
And, with the voice of harmony itself,
Plead the just cause of innocence traduced;
Deaf as the adder, blind as upstart greatness,
She sees nor hears! And yet let Slander whisper,
Or evil-eyed Suspicion look oblique,
Rumour has fewer tongues than she has ears;
And Argus's hundred eyes are dim and slow,
To piercing Jealousy's!——
Ard. No more, no more:
I know its plagues; but where's the remedy?
Mar. In your Alicia.
Frank. She shall heal these wounds.
Ard. She's my disease, and can she be my cure?
My friends should rather teach me to abhor her,
To tear her image from my bleeding heart!
Mar. We leave that hateful office to the fiends.
Frank. If you e'er loved, you'll not refuse to see her:
You promised that.
Ard. Did I?
Frank. Indeed you did.
Ard. Well, then, some other time.
Frank. No; see her now.
Ard. Franklin, I know my heart, and dare not see her.
I have a husband's honour to maintain,
I fear the lover's weakness may betray.
Let me not do what honour must condemn,
And friendship blush to hear.
Frank. That Arden never will.
Mar. Did you but know her grief——
Ard. Am I the cause?
Have I, just Heaven! have I e'er injured her?
Yet I'm the coward. O preposterous fear!
See where she comes! Armed with my numerous wrongs,
I'll meet, with honourable confidence,
The offending wife, and look the honest husband.
Frank. Maria, we'll withdraw: even friendship here
Would seem impertinence.
[*Exeunt Franklin and Maria.*
Ard. Be still, my heart!

ALICIA *enters, not seeing* ARDEN.

Alic. How shall I bear my Arden's just reproaches!
Or can a reconcilement long continue,
That's founded on deceit? Can I avow
My secret guilt!—No; at so mean a thought
Abandoned infamy herself would blush.
Nay, could I live with public loss of honour,
Arden would die to see Alicia scorned.
He's here! earth open! hide me from his sight!
Ard. Guilt chains her tongue! Lo! silent, self-condemned,
With tearful eyes, and trembling limbs, she stands.
Alic. Fain would I kiss his footsteps; but that look,
Where indignation seems to strive with grief,
Forbids me to approach him.
Ard. Who would think,
That anguish were not real?
Alic. I'm rooted here!
Ard. Those tears, methinks, even if her guilt were certain,
Might wash away her pains.
Alic. Support me, Heaven!
Ard. Curse on the abject thought! I shall relapse
To simple dotage. She steals on my heart,
She conquers with her eyes. If I but hear her voice,
Nor earth, nor Heaven, can save me from her snares!
O! let me fly—if I have yet the power.
Alic. O Arden! do not, do not leave me thus!
[*Kneels, and holds him*

Ard. I pray thee, loose thy hold!
Alic. O never, never!
Ard. Why should I stay to tell thee of my wrongs,
To aggravate thy guilt, and wound thy soul?
Thyself, if all these agonizing struggles,
Of tears, of sighs, of groans, of speechless sorrow,
Be but sincere—thyself will do it better.
One thing I'll tell thee—for perhaps 'twill please thee;
Thou'st broke my heart, Alicia.
Alic. Oh! [*She falls to the ground.*
Ard. And canst thou,
Can woman pity, whom she hath undone?
Why dost thou grasp my knees? what wouldst thou say,
If thou couldst find thy speech?
Alic. O! mercy, mercy!
Ard. Thou hast had none on me; let go my hand!
Why dost thou press it to thy throbbing heart,
That beats—but not for me?
Alic. Then may it ne'er beat more!
Ard. At least, I'm sure it did not always so.
Alic. For that my soul is pierced with deep remorse,
For that I bow me to the dust before thee,
And die to be forgiven! O Arden! Arden!
Ard. Presumptuous fool! what business hast thou here?
Did I not know my weakness, and her power!
Rise, rise, Alicia.
Alic. No; here let me lie,
On the bare bosom of this conscious earth,
Till Arden speak the words of peace and comfort,
Or my heart break before him!
Ard. O Alicia,
Thou inconsistent spring of grief and joy,
Whence bitter streams, and sweet, alternate flow,
Come to my arms, and in this too fond bosom
Disburden all the fulness of thy soul!
Alic. Let me approach, with awe, that sacred temple,
Resume my seat, and dwell for ever there!
Ard. There ever reign, as on thy native throne,
Thou lovely wanderer!
Alic. Am I at last,
In error's fatal mazes long bewildered,
Permitted here to find my peace and safety!
Ard. Dry up thy tears; and tell me, truly tell me:
Has my long-suffering love at length prevailed,
And art thou mine indeed?
Alic. Heaven is my witness,
I love thee, Arden; and esteem thy love
Above all earthly good. Thy kind forgiveness
Speaks to my soul that peaceful calm confirmed,
Which reason and reflection had begun.
Ard. Thou'rt cheaply purchased with unnumbered sighs,
With many a bitter tear, and years of patience,
Thou treasure of more worth than mines of gold!
I will not doubt my happiness. Thou art,
Thou wilt be mine, ever, and only mine.
Alic. I am, I will. I ne'er knew joy till now.
Ard. This is our truest, happiest, nuptial day.
To-night, thou knowest, according to my custom,
Our yearly fair returning with St Valentine,
I treat my friends. I go to countenance
Their honest mirth, and cheer them with my bounty.
'Till happy night, farewell! My best Alicia,
How will our friends rejoice, our foes repine,
To see us thus! [*Exit.*
Alic. Thus ever may they see us!
The wandering fires, that have so long misled me,
Are now extinguished, and my heart is Arden's.
The flowery path of innocence and peace
Shines bright before, and I shall stray no longer.
Whence then these sighs, and why these floods of tears?
Sighs are the language of a broken heart,
And tears the tribute each enlightened eye
Pays, and must pay, for vice and folly past.
And yet the painfullest virtue hath its pleasure:
Though dangers rise, yet, peace restored within,
My soul collected shall undaunted meet them.
Though trouble, grief, and death, the lot of all,
On good and bad without distinction fall,
The soul, which conscious innocence sustains,
Supports with ease these temporary pains;
But stung with guilt, and loaded with despair,
Becomes itself a burden none can bear. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The street. People at a distance, as at a fair.*

Enter Arden *on one side, and* Black Will *and* Shakebag *on the other,* Green *directing them.*

B. Will. Shakebag, you'll second me—S'blood, give the way. [*Jostles Arden.*
Shakebag. May we not pass the streets?
Ard. I saw you not.
B. Will. Your sight perhaps is bad; your feeling may be better. [*Strikes him.*
Ard. Insolent villain! [*Draws.*
B. Will. Come, we'll teach you manners.
Ard. Both at once! barbarous cowards!

Enter Mosby.

Mos. O bloody dogs! attempt a life so precious!
B. Will. This is a fury, George.
[*Black Will and Shakebag beaten off.*
Shake. I've pinked him though——
Ard. Villains, come back, and finish your design!
Mos. Shall I pursue them, sir?
Ard. Not for the world——
Mosby! amazing generosity!
Mos. I hope you are not hurt.
Ard. Pierced to the heart——

Mos. Forbid it, heaven! quick, let me fly for help.
Ard. With sharp reflection: Mosby, I can't bear
To be so far obliged to one I've wronged.
Mos. Who would not venture life to save a friend?
Ard. From you I've not deserved that tender name.
Mos. No more of that—would I were worthy of it!
Ard. I own my heart, by boiling passions torn,
Forgets its gentleness—yet is ever open
To melting gratitude. O say what price
Can buy your friendship?
Mos. Only think me yours.
Ard. Easy, indeed. I am too much obliged.
Why recked not your good sword its justice on me,
When, mad with jealous rage, in my own house,
I urged you to my ruin?
Mos. I loved you then
With the same warmth as now.
Ard. What's here! you bleed.
Let me bind up your wound.
Mos. A trifle, sir——
Ard. Your friendship makes it so. See, Franklin, see

Enter FRANKLIN.

The man I treated as a coward, bleeding,
Wretch that I am! for his defence of me.
Look to your wound. And, Mosby, let us hope
You'll sup with me. There will be honest Bradshaw,
And Franklin here, and——
Mos. Sir, I will not fail.
Frank. I shall not come.
Ard. Nay, Franklin, that's unkind.
Prithee——
Frank. Nay, urge me not. I have my reasons.
Mos. Avoids my company! So much the better.
His may not be so proper. [*Aside.*] An hour hence,
If you are not engaged, we'll meet at Fowl's.
Ard. I will be there.
Mos. 'Till then I take my leave. [*Exit Mosby.*
Ard. How have I been mistaken in this man?
Frank. How are you sure, you're not mistaken now?
Ard. No doubt he loves me; and I blush to think
How I've suspected him, and wronged Alicia.
Frank. May you be ever happy in your wife: But——
Ard. Speak—But what? Let's have no riddles here.
Can she be innocent, and Mosby guilty?
Frank. To speak my thoughts, this new officious fondness
Makes me suspect: I like him worse than ever.
Ard. Because I like him better? What a churl!
Frank. You are credulous, and treat my serious doubts
With too much levity. You vex me, Arden. [*Exit.*
Ard. Believe me, friend, you'll laugh at this hereafter. [*Exit the other way.*

MOSBY, *having watched* FRANKLIN *out, re-enters with* GREEN.

Mos. The surly friend has left him—As I wished—
You see how eagerly the foolish fowl
Flies headlong to our snare: now to inclose him.
At eight the guests are bidden to his banquet,
And only Michael, of his numerous train,
Keeps home with his Alicia. He'll secure
The keys of all the doors, and let you in
With my two trusty bloodhounds. Alicia seems
Averse at present.
Green. She'll not dare betray us.
Mos. Not when the deed is done. We know too much.
She'll be our prisoner, and shall be observed.
Towards evening, then, upon a slight pretence
To pass an hour at draughts, (a game he loves)
I'll draw this husband home. You'll be prepared
In the inner room, (Michael will shew it you)
'Till, at a signal given, you all rush forth,
And strangle him.
Green. Good—'tis a death, that leaves
No bloody character to mark the place.
Mos. However, come all provided with your daggers.
Do you seek Michael, I'll instruct the rest.
Green. What shall the signal be?
Mos. These words in the game,
I take you now.
Green. Arden! thou'rt taken now indeed.
Mos. His body, thrown behind the abbey-wall,
Shall be descried by the early passenger,
Returning from the fair. My friend, thy hand;
Shakes it? Be firm, and our united strength
With ease shall cast dead Arden to the earth.
Green. Thanks to his foolish tenderness of soul!
Mos. True; he, who trusts an old inveterate foe,
Bares his own breast, and courts the fatal blow.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Arden's House.*

Alicia *alone.*

What have I heard! Is this the house of Arden!
O! that the power, which has so often saved him,
Would send his guardian angel to him now,
To whisper in his ear his present danger!
Fly, Arden, fly! avoid this fatal roof,
Where murder lurks, and certain death awaits thee!
Wander——no matter where——Turn but from hence,
Thou canst not miss thy way—The house is theirs.
I am suspected—Michael guards the door—
And even Maria's absent. Bloody Mosby,
These are the fruits of thy detested lust.
But hark! the fiends approach. Green had humanity.

Enter Green, Black Will, Shakebag, *and* Michael.

Could I prevail on him! O sir—
[*Talks apart with Green.*

B. Will. What a fair house! rich furniture! what piles of massy plate! And then yon iron chest! Good plunder, comrade.

Shake. And madam Arden there—A prize worth them all to me.

B. Will. And shall that fawning, white-livered coward, Mosby, enjoy all these?

Shake. No doubt he would, were we the fools he thinks us.

Green. Had he as many lives as drops of blood,
I'd have them all.—— [*To Alicia.*

Alic. But for one single night——

Green. I'd not defer his fate a single hour,
Though I were sure myself to die the next.
So, peace, irresolute woman—and be thankful
For thy own life.

Alic. O mercy, mercy!

Green. Yes,
Such mercy as the nursing lioness,
When drained of moisture by her eager young,
Shews to the prey that first encounters her.

B. Will. Who talks of mercy, when I am here?

Green. She would prevent us; but our steady courage
Laughs at her coward arts.
[*Knocking gently at the gate.*
Why, Michael!

Mich. Sir!

Green. Thou bloodless coward, what dost tremble at?
Dost thou not hear a knocking at the gate?
[*Exit Michael.*
Mosby, no doubt. How like a sly adulterer,
Who steals at midnight, and with caution gives
The appointed signal to his neighbour's wife!

B. Will. Which is the place, where we're to be concealed?

Green. This inner room.

B. Will. 'Tis well. The word is, *Now I take you.* [*Knocking louder than before.*

Green. Ay, there's authority. That speaks the master.
He seems in haste: 'Twere pity he should wait,
Now we're so well prepared for his reception.
[*Green, Black Will, and Shakebag, go into the inner room.*

Alic. Now, whither are they gone? The door's unbarred.
I hear the sound of feet. Should it be Arden,
And Mosby with him—I can't bear the doubt,
Nor would I be resolved. Be hushed, my fears!
'Tis Mosby, and alone. [*Enter Mosby.*] Sir, hear me, Mosby.

Mos. Madam, is this a time?

Alic. I will be heard,
And mark me, when I swear, never hereafter,
By look, word, act——

Mos. Be damned—your husband—

Alic. Ha! [*She screams.*

Enter Arden *and* Michael.

Ard. Am I a monster, that I fright thee thus?
[*To Michael.*
Say, what has happened since I left the house?
Thou look'st, Alicia, as if wild amazement
Had changed thee to the image of herself.

Alic. Is Franklin with you?

Ard. No.

Alic. Nor Fowl, nor Bradshaw?

Ard. Neither, but both expected.

Alic. Merciful Heaven!

Ard. I meant to dedicate this happy night
To mirth and joy, and thy returning love.
[*She sighs.*
Make me not sad, Alicia: For my sake
Let discontent be banished from your brow,
And welcome Arden's friends with laughing eyes.
Amongst the first let Mosby be enrolled—

Alic. The villain!

Ard. Nay, I am too well convinced
Of Mosby's friendship, and Alicia's love,
Ever to wrong them more by weak suspicions.
I've been indeed to blame, but I will make thee
A large amends, Alicia. Look upon him,
As on the man, that gave your husband life.

Alic. Would take my husband's life!—I'll tell him all,
And cast this load of horror from my soul:
Yet, 'tis a dreadful hazard. Both must die.
A fearful thought! Franklin may come, or Bradshaw—
O let me not precipitate his fate! [*Aside.*

Mos. I see my presence is offensive there.
[*Going.*
Ard. Alicia! No—she has no will but mine.
Mos. It is not fit she should: and yet—perhaps—
'Twere better, sir—Permit me to retire.
Ard. No more—Our friendship, publicly avowed,
Will clear her injured virtue to the world.
Mos. Something there is in that—
Ard. It is a debt
I owe to both your fames, and pay it freely.
Mos. For her sake, then; not for my own.
Alic. [*Aside.*] O damned dissembler!
Ard. Come, take your seat; this shall not save your money.
Bring us the tables, Michael. [*They sit and play.*
Alic. [*Aside.*] O just Heaven!
Wilt thou not interpose?—How dread this pause!
When thousand terrors crowd the narrow space.
Ard. Your thoughts are absent, Mosby.
B. Will. Blood! why don't Mosby give the word? [*Aside.*
Mich. Give back, the game's against him.
Alic. Fly, Franklin! fly, to save thy Arden's life.
Murder herself, that chases him in view,
Beholding me, starts back, and, for a moment,
Suspends her thirst of blood. [*Aside.*
Ard. Come, give it up; I told you I should win. [*Rises.*
Mos. No, I see an advantage; move again.
Ard. There.
Mos. *Now I take you.*
[*Black Will throws a scarf over Arden's head, in order to strangle him; but Arden disengages himself, wrests a dagger from Shakebag, and stands on his defence, till Mosby getting behind, and seizing his arm, the rest assassinate him.*]
Alic. O Power omnipotent! make strong his arm!
Give him to conquer! Ha! my prayers are curses,
And draw down vengeance where they meant a blessing.
Ard. Inhospitable villain!
Alic. O! he dies!
Ard. O hold your bloody—Mosby too! Nay, then, [*Falling.*
I yield me to my fate. Is this, Alicia,
This the return for my unequalled love?
Alic. Or death, or madness, would be mercies now,
Therefore beyond my hopes.
Ard. O Mosby, Michael, Green!
Why have you drawn my blood upon your souls?
Mos. Behold her there, to whom I was betrothed,
And ask no further.
Green. Think on thy abbey-lands
From injured Green.
Ard. You now are your own judges,
But we shall meet again, where right and truth—
Who—who are these? But I forgive you all.
Thy hand, Alicia.
Alic. I'll not give it thee.
Ard. O wretched woman! have they killed thee, too?
A deadly paleness, agony, and horror,
On thy sad visage sit. My soul hangs on thee,
And, though departing—just departing—loves thee:
Is loth to leave, unreconciled to thee,
This useless mangled tenement of clay.
Dismiss her pleased, and say thou'rt innocent.
Alic. All hell contains not such a guilty wretch.
Ard. Then welcome death! though in the shape of murder.
How have I doated to idolatry!
Vain, foolish wretch, and thoughtless of hereafter,
Nor hoped, nor wished a heaven beyond her love.
Now, unprepared, I perish by her hate.
Alic. Though blacker, and more guilty, than the fiends,
My soul is white from this accursed deed.
O Arden! hear me—
Ard. Full of doubts, I come,
O thou Supreme, to seek thy awful presence.
My soul is on the wing. I own thy justice.
Prevent me with thy mercy. [*Dies.*
Alic. Turn not from me:
Behold me, pity me, survey my sorrows!
I, who despised the duty of a wife,
Will be thy slave. Spit on me, spurn me, sir,
I'll love thee still. O couldst thou court my scorn,
And now abhor me, when I love thee more,
If possible, than e'er thou lovedst Alicia!
Mos. Mad fool, he's dead, and hears thee not.
Alic. 'Tis false——
He smiles upon me, and applauds my vengeance.
[*Snatches a dagger, and strikes at Mosby.*
A knocking at the gate.
Mos. Damnation!
B. Will. 'Sdeath! we shall leave our work unfinished, and be betrayed at last. Let us hide the body.
Mos. Force her away.
Alic. Inhuman bloody villains!
[*She swoons, as she is forced from the body.*

Enter MARIA.

Mar. Mosby here!—
My sliding feet, as they move trembling forwards,
Are drenched in blood. O may I only fancy
That Arden there lies murdered——
Mos. How fares Alicia?
Alic. As the howling damned: and thou my hell—
Mar. Unhappy brother!
If thou hast done this deed, hope not to escape:
Mercy herself, who only seeks for crimes,
That she may pardon and reform the guilty,
Would change her nature at a sight like this.

Enter MICHAEL.

Mich. The guests are come—the servants all returned.

Mos. Alicia, be thyself; and mask thy heart
[*Mosby lifts up Alicia.*
From every prying eye with courteous smiles.

Alic. Thou canst not think me mean enough to live?

Mos. You would not chuse an ignominious death?

Alic. That's all I dread—Might but the silent grave,
When it receives me to its dark abode,
Hide, with my dust, my shame!—O might that be,
And Arden's death revenged! 'Tis my sole prayer.
If not, may awful justice have her course!
[*Exit Alicia.*

Mos. Sister! our lives are thine—

Mar. Though Mosby has shook off humanity,
I cannot be his accuser. [*Exit Maria.*

Mos. Follow them, Green, and watch Alicia's conduct.

Green. I will, but cannot answer for my own.
O Arden! Arden! could we change conditions!
[*Exit Green.*

B. Will. Why, what a crew of cowards!
In the same moment murdering and repenting.

Mos. Give me the ring, that is on Arden's finger.

Shake. There. Will you have his purse too?

Mos. No, keep that.

B. Will. Thanks for our own: we should have kept the ring,
Were it not too remarkable.
But how must we dispose of the body?

Mos. Convey it through the garden, to the field
Behind the abbey-wall: Michael will shew the way.
The night is dark and cloudy—yet, take heed,
The house is full of company.

B. Will. Sir, if you doubt our conduct, do it yourself.

Mos. Nay, gentlemen—

Shake. Pretend to direct us!

Mos. For your own sakes—Arden will soon be mist.

Shake. We know our business, sir.

Mos. I doubt it not.
There's your reward. The horses both are saddled,
And ready for your flight.

B. Will. Use them yourself:
I hope we're as safe as you.

Mos. Why, gentlemen—Arden! I used thee worse. [*Aside.*

B. Will. We shall take care, however, for our own sakes.

Mos. 'Tis very well—I hope we all are friends.
So—softly—softly—Michael, not that door—
[*Michael going out at the wrong door.*
So—make what speed you can: I'll wait you there. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A hall in* ARDEN'S *house.*

They must pass undescried: gardens and fields
Are dreary deserts now. Night-fowls and beasts of prey
Avoid the pinching rigour of the season,
Nor leave their shelter at a time like this.
And yet this night, this lingering winter night,
Hung with a weight of clouds, that stops her course,
Contracts new horrors, and a deeper black,
From this damned deed.—Mosby, thou hast thy wish.
Arden is dead; now count thy gains at leisure.
Dangers without, on every side suspicion;
Within, my starting conscience marks such wounds,
As hell can equal, only murderers feel. [*A pause.*
This, this the end of all my flattering hopes!
O! happiest was I in my humble state:
Though I lay down in want, I slept in peace:
My daily toil begat my night's repose;
My night's repose made day-light pleasing to me.
But now I've climbed the top-bough of the tree,
And sought to build my nest among the clouds:
The gentlest gales of summer shake my bed,
And dreams of murder harrow up my soul.
But hark!—Not yet:—'Tis dreadful being alone.
This awful silence, that, unbroken, reigns
Through earth and air, awakes attention more,
Than thunder bursting from ten thousand clouds:
S'death!—'tis but Michael—Say—

Enter MICHAEL.

Mich. Dead Arden lies
Behind the abbey—'tis a dismal sight!
It snowed apace while we disposed the body.

Mos. And not as you returned?

Mich. No, sir—

Mos. That's much—
Should you be questioned as to Arden's death,
You'll not confess?

Mich. No, so Maria's mine.

Mos. She's thine, if all a brother can—

Mich.————What's if?
I bought her dear, at hazard of my soul,
And force shall make her mine.—

Mos.————Why, how now, coward!

Enter MARIA.

Mar. The guests refuse to take their seats without you.
Alicia's grief too borders on distraction.
Thy presence may appease—

Mos. Increase it rather.

Mar. Michael, your absence too has been observed.

Mos. Say we are coming. [*Exit Maria.*

Mich. One thing I'd forgot. [*Returning*
Soon as the company have left the house,
The ruffians will return.

Mos. What would the villains?

Mich. They muttered threats and curses,
And seemed not satisfied with their reward.
[*Exit Michael.*
Mos. Let them take all. Ambition, avarice, lust,
That drove me on to murder, now forsake me.
Oh Arden! if thy discontented ghost
Still hovers here to see thy blood revenged,
View, view the anguish of this guilty breast,
And be appeased! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*A room in* ARDEN'S *house. A table spread for supper.*

GREEN, BRADSHAW, ADAM FOWL, ALICIA, MARIA, *&c.*

Brad. Madam, be comforted.
A. Fowl. Some accident, or business unforeseen, detains him thus.
Brad. I doubt not of his safety.
Alic. I thank you, gentlemen; I know you loved
My Arden well, and kindly speak your wishes.

Enter MOSBY.

Mos. I am ashamed I've made you wait: be seated.
Green. Madam, first take your place.
Alic. Make me not mad—
o me henceforth all places are alike. [*Sits.*
Mos. Come, since we want the master of the house,
I'll take his seat for once.
Alic. Dares he do this? [*Aside.*
Mos. I'm much afflicted, that he stays so late;
The times are perilous.
Green. And he has enemies.
Though no man, sure, did e'er deserve them less.
Mos. This day he was assaulted in the street.
Green. You saved him then.
Mos. Would I were with him now!
Mar. She starts, her looks are wild. [*Aside.*]
How fare you, madam?
Alic. I'm lost in admiration of your brother.
Mar. I fear her more than ever. [*Aside.*]—
Madam, be merry.
Mos. Michael, some wine. Health and long life to Arden, [*Rising.*
Alic. The good you wish, and have procured for Arden, [*Rising.*
Light on thyself!
Mar. For Heaven's sake!—
Alic. Give me way. [*Comes forward.*
Let them dispatch, and send me to my husband:
[*All rise.*
I've lived too long with falsehood and deceit.
[*Knocking at the gate.*
A. Fowl. What noise is that? [*Exit Michael.*
Brad. Pray Heaven, that all be right!
Mos. Bar all the doors.

Enter MICHAEL.

Mich. We are discovered, sir! [*To Mosby.*
The mayor with officers, and men in arms.

Enter MAYOR, *&c.*

Mayor. Go you with these, and do as I directed. [*Exeunt officers and others.*
I'm sorry that the duty of my office
Demands a visit so unseasonable.
Mos. Your worship doubtless were a welcome guest
At any hour; but wherefore thus attended?
Mayor. I have received a warrant from the council,
To apprehend two most notorious ruffians;
And information being made, on oath,
That they were seen to enter here to-night,
I'm come to search.
Green. I'm glad it is no worse. [*Aside.*
Mos. And can you think, that Arden entertains
Villains like those, you speak of? Were he here,
You'd not be thanked for this officiousness.
Mayor. I know my duty, sir, and that respect,
So justly due to our good neighbour's worth.—
But where is Arden?
Alic. Heavens! where indeed!
Mar. Alicia, for my sake—— [*Aside.*
Alic. If I were silent,
Each precious drop of murdered Arden's blood
Would find a tongue, and cry to Heaven for vengeance!
Mayor. What says the lady?
Mos. Oh! sir, heed her not;
Her husband has not been at home to-night,
And her misboding sorrow for his absence
Has almost made her frantic.
Mayor. Scarce an hour,
Since I beheld him enter here with you!
Mos. The darkness of the night deceived you, sir;
It was a stranger, since departed hence.
Mayor. That's most surprising! No man knows him better.
Frank. [*without*] Within there—ho—bar up your gates with care,
And set a watch. Let not a man go by——

FRANKLIN, *and others, enter with lights.*

And every tongue, that gave not its consent
To Arden's death, join mine, and cry aloud
To Heaven and earth for justice. Honest Arden,
My friend, is murdered!
Mayor. Murdered!
Green. How?
Mos. By whom?
Frank. How shall I utter what my eyes have seen!
Horrid, with many a gaping wound, he lies
Behind the abbey, a sad spectacle!
O vengeance! vengeance!
Mayor. Justly art thou moved.
Passion is reason in a cause like this.
Frank. Eternal Providence, to whose bright eye
Darkness itself is as the noon-day blaze,
Who brings the midnight murderer, and his deeds,

To light and shame, has, in his own security,
Found these.
Mayor. Here seize them all—this instant:
[*Alicia faints.*
Look to the lady. This may be but feigned.
Your charge but goes along with my suspicions.
Brad. And mine.
A. Fowl. And mine.
Frank. First hear me, and then judge,
Whether, on slight presumptions, I accuse them.
These honest men (neighbours and townsmen all)
Conducted me, dropping with grief and fear,
To where the body lay: with them I took these notes,
Not to be trusted to the faithless memory.

'Huge clots of blood, and some of Arden's hair,
'May still be seen upon the garden-wall;
'Many such rushes, as these floors are strewed with,
'Stick to his shoes and garments; and the prints
'Of several feet may in the snow be traced,
'From the stark body to the very door!'

These are presumptions he was murdered here,
And that the assassins, having borne his corpse
Into the fields, hither returned again.
Mos. Are these your proofs?
Green. These are but circumstances,
And only prove thy malice.
Frank. And this scarf,
Known to be Arden's, in the court was found,
All blood.——
Mayor. Search them.
Mich. I thought I'd thrown it down the well.
[*Aside.*
Mayor. [*To an Officer*] Enter that room, and search the lady there;
We may, perhaps, discover more.
[*Officer goes out, and re-enters; in the mean time, another Officer searches Mosby and Green.*
1. *Offi.* On Arden's wife I found this letter.
2. *Offi.* And I this ring on Mosby.
Mayor. Righteous Heaven!
Well may'st thou hang thy head, detested villain!
This very day did Arden wear this ring;
I saw it on his hand.
Mos. I freely yield me to my fate.

Enter another Officer.

Offi. We've seized two men behind some stalks of wood.
Mayor. Well, bring them in.

BLACK WILL *and* SHAKEBAG *brought in.*

They answer the description;
But let them wait, till I have done with these.
Heavens! what a scene of villany is here!
[*Having read the letter.*

B. Will. Since we are sure to die, though I could wish it were in better company (for I hate that fawning rascal, Mosby), I will tell the truth for once. He has been long engaged in an affair with Arden's wife there; but fearing a discovery, and hoping to get into his estate, hired us to hide him. That's all.
Mayor. And you the horrid deed performed?
Shake. We did, with his assistance, and Green's and Michael's.
Mayor. This letter proves Alicia, from the first,
Was made acquainted with your black design.
B. Will. I know nothing of that; but if she was, she repented of it afterwards. So, I think, you call a change of mind.
Mayor. That may avail her at the bar of heaven,
But is no plea at our's [*Alicia brought in*]. Bear them to prison;
Load them with irons, make them feel their guilt,
And groan away their miserable hours,
Till sentence of the law shall call them forth
To public execution.
Alic. I adore
The unerring hand of justice; and with silence
Had yielded to my fate, but for this maid,
Who, as my soul dreads justice on her crimes,
Knew not, or e'er consented, to this deed.
Mayor. But did she not consent to keep it secret?
Mos. To save a brother, and most wretched friend.——
Mayor. She has undone herself. Behold how innocence
May suffer in bad fellowship.—And Bradshaw,
My honest neighbour Bradshaw, too: I read it
With grief and wonder.——
Brad. Madam, I appeal
To you; as you are shortly to appear
Before a judge, that sees our secret thoughts,
Say, had I knowledge, or——
Alic. You brought the letter,
But well I hope, you knew not the contents.
Mayor. Hence with them all, till time and farther light
Shall clear these mysteries.
A. Fowl. If I'm condemned,
My blood be on his head, that gives the sentence.
I'm not accused, and only ask for justice.
Frank. You shall have justice all, and rigorous justice.
So shall the growth of such enormous crimes,
By their dread fate, be checked in future times.
Of avarice, Mosby a dread instance prove,
And poor Alicia of unlawful love!
[*Exeunt omnes.*

GUSTAVUS VASA,

THE

DELIVERER OF HIS COUNTRY.

BY

BROOKE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

CRISTIERN, *king of Denmark and Norway, and usurper of Sweden.*
TROLLIO, *a Swede, archbishop of Upsal, and vice-gerent to Cristiern.*
PETERSON, *a Swedish nobleman, secretly of the Danish party, and friend to Trollio.*
LAERTES, *a young Danish nobleman, attendant to Cristina.*
GUSTAVUS, *formerly general of the Swedes, and first cousin to the deceased king.*
ARVIDA, *of the royal blood of Sweden, friend and cousin to Gustavus.*
ANDERSON, *chief lord of Dalecarlia.*
ARNOLDUS, *a Swedish priest, and chaplain in the copper-mines of Dalecarlia.*
SIVARD, *captain of the Dalecarlians.*

WOMEN.

CRISTINA, *daughter to Cristiern.*
AUGUSTA, *mother to Gustavus,* } *prisoners in*
GUSTAVA, *sister to Gustavus, a child,* } *Cristiern's camp.*
MARIANA, *attendant and confident to Cristina.*

Soldiers, Peasants, Messengers, and Attendants.

Scene—Dalecarlia, a northern province in Sweden.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The inside of the copper-mines of Dalecarlia.*

Enter ANDERSON, ARNOLDUS, *and Servants, with torches.*

And. You tell me wonders!
Arn. Soft, behold, my lord,
[*Points behind the Scenes.*
Behold him stretched, where reigns eternal night!
The flint his pillow, and cold damps his covering!
Yet, bold of spirit, and robust of limb,
He throws inclemency aside, nor feels
The lot of human frailty.
And. What horrors hang around! the savage race
Ne'er hold their den, but where some glimmering ray
May bring the cheer of morn. What, then, is he?
His dwelling marks a secret in his soul,
And whispers somewhat more than man about him.
Arn. Draw but the veil of his apparent wretchedness,
And you shall find, his form is but assumed,
To hoard some wondrous treasure, lodged within.
And. Let him bear up to what thy praises speak him,
And I will win him, spite of his reserve,
Bind him, with sacred friendship, to my soul,
And make him half myself.

Arn. 'Tis nobly promised;
For worth is rare, and wants a friend in Sweden;
And yet I tell thee, in her age of heroes,
When nursed by freedom, all her sons grew great,
And every peasant was a prince in virtue:
I greatly err, or this abandoned stranger
Had stepped the first for fame—though now he seeks
To veil his name, and cloud his shine of virtues;
For there is danger in them.
And. True, Arnoldus;
Were there a prince, throughout the sceptered globe,
Who searched out merit, for its due preferment,
With half that care our tyrant seeks it out
For ruin; happy, happy were that state,
Beyond the golden fable of those pure
And early ages. Wherefore this, good Heaven?
Is it of fate, that, who assumes a crown,
Throws off humanity?
Arn. So Cristiern holds.
He claims our country as by right of conquest,
A right to every wrong. Even now, 'tis said,
The tyrant envies what our mountains yield
Of health, or aliment; he comes upon us,
Attended by a numerous host, to seize
These last retreats of our expiring liberty.
And. Say'st thou?
Arn. This rising day, this instant hour,
Thus chaced, we stand upon the utmost brink
Of steep perdition, and must leap the precipice,
Or turn upon our hunters.
And. Now, Gustavus!
Thou prop and glory of inglorious Sweden,
Where art thou, mightiest man?—Were he but here!—
I'll tell thee, my Arnoldus, I beheld him,
Then when he first drew sword, serene and dreadful,
As the browed evening ere the thunder break;
For soon he made it toilsome to our eyes
To mark his speed, and trace the paths of conquest.
In vain we followed, where he swept the field;
'Twas death alone could wait upon Gustavus.
Arn. He was, indeed, whate'er our wish could form him.
And. Arrayed and beauteous in the blood of Danes,
The invaders of his country, thrice he chaced
This Cristiern, this fell conqueror, this usurper,
With rout and foul dishonour at his heels,
To plunge his head in Denmark.
Arn. Nor ever had the tyrant known return,
To tread our necks, and blend us with the dust,
Had he not dared to break through every law
That sanctifies the nations, seized our hero,
The pledge of specious treaty, tore him from us,
And led him, chained, to Denmark.
And. Then we fell.
If still he lives, we yet may learn to rise,
But never can I dare to rest a hope
On any arm but his.
Arn. And yet, I trust,
This stranger, that delights to dwell with darkness,
Unknown, unfriended, compassed round with wretchedness,
Conceals some mighty purpose in his breast,
Now labouring into birth.
And. When came he hither?
Arn. Six moons have changed upon the face of night,
Since here he first arrived, in servile weeds,
But yet of mein majestic. I observed him,
And, ever as I gazed, some nameless charm,
A wondrous greatness not to be concealed,
Broke through his form, and awed my soul before him.
Amid these mines, he earns the hireling's portion;
His hands out-toil the hind; while, on his brow,
Sits Patience, bathed in the laborious drops
Of painful industry——I oft have sought,
With friendly tender of some worthier service,
To win him from his temper; but he shuns
All offers, yet declined with graceful act,
Engaging beyond utterance: and, at eve,
When all retire to some domestic solace,
He only stays, and, as you see, the earth
Receives him to her dark and cheerless bosom.
And. Has no unwary moment e'er betrayed
The labours of his soul, some favourite grief,
Whereon to raise conjecture?
Arn. I saw, as some bold peasants late deplored
Their country's bondage, sudden passion seized
And bore him from his seeming; strait his form
Was turn'd to terror, ruin filled his eye,
And his proud step appeared to awe the world:
When checked, as though an impotence of rage,
Damp sadness soon usurped upon his brow,
And the big tear rolled graceful down his visage.
And. Your words imply a man of much importance.
Arn. So I suspected, and at dead of night
Stole on his slumbers; his full heart was busy,
And oft his tongue pronounced the hated name
Of—bloody Cristiern——there he seemed to pause;
And, recollected to one voice, he cried,
'O Sweden! O my country! Yet I'll save thee.'
And. Forbear—he rises—Heavens, what majesty!

Enter GUSTAVUS.

And. Your pardon, stranger, if the voice of virtue,
If cordial amity from man to man,
And somewhat that should whisper to the soul,
To seek and cheer the sufferer, led me hither,

†

Impatient to salute thee. Be it thine
Alone to point the path of friendship out;
And my best power shall wait upon thy fortunes.
Gust. Yes, generous man! there is a wondrous test,
The truest, worthiest, noblest cause for friendship;
Dearer than life, than interest, or alliance,
And equal to your virtues.
And. Say——unfold.
Gust. Art thou a soldier, a chief lord in Sweden?
And yet a stranger to thy country's voice,
That loudly calls the hidden patriot forth?
But what's a soldier? What's a lord in Sweden?
All worth is fled, or fallen——nor has a life
Been spared, but for dishonour; spared to breed
More slaves for Denmark, to beget a race
Of new-born virgins for the unsatiated lust
Of our new masters. Sweden! thou'rt no more!
Queen of the North! thy land of liberty,
Thy house of heroes, and thy seat of virtues,
Is now the tomb, where thy brave sons lie speechless,
And foreign snakes engender.
And. O 'tis true.
But wherefore? To what purpose?
Gust. Think of Stockholm!
When Cristiern seized upon the hour of peace,
And drenched the hospitable floor with blood;
Then fell the flower of Sweden, mighty names!
Her hoary senators, and gasping patriots.
The tyrant spoke, and his licentious band
Of blood-trained ministry were loosed to ruin.
Invention wantoned in the toil of infants
Stabbed on the breast, or reeking on the points
Of sportive javelins. Husbands, sons, and sires,
With dying ears drank in the loud despair
Of shrieking chastity. The waste of war
Was peace and friendship to this civil massacre.
O heaven and earth! Is there a cause for this?
For sin without temptation, calm, cool villany,
Deliberate mischief, unimpassioned lust,
And smiling murder? Lie thou there, my soul;
Sleep, sleep upon it! image not the form
Of any dream but this, 'till time grows pregnant,
And thou canst wake to vengeance.
And. Thou hast greatly moved me. Ha! thy tears start forth.
Yes, let them flow, our country's fate demands them;
I too will mingle mine, while yet 'tis left us
To weep in secret, and to sigh with safety.
But wherefore talk of vengeance? 'Tis a word
Should be engraven on the new fallen snow,
Where the first beam may melt it from observance.
Vengeance on Cristiern! Norway and the Dane,
The sons of Sweden, all the peopled North,
Bends at his nod: my humbler boast of power
Meant not to cope with crowns.
Gust. Then what remains
Is briefly this; your friendship has my thanks,
But must not my acceptance: never——no——
First sink, thou baleful mansion, to the centre!
And be thy darkness doubled round my head,
'Ere I forsake thee for the bliss of paradise,
To be enjoyed beneath a tyrant's sceptre!
No, that were slavery—Freedom is
The brilliant gift of Heaven, 'tis reason's self,
The kin of Deity—I will not part it.
And. Nor I, while I can hold it; but alas!
That is not in our choice.
Gust. Why? where's that power whose engines are of force
To bend the brave and virtuous man to slavery?
Base fear, the laziness of lust, gross appetites,
These are the ladders, and the grovelling footstool,
From whence the tyrant rises on our wrongs,
Secure and sceptered in the soul's servility.
He has debauched the genius of our country,
And rides triumphant, while her captive sons
Await his nod, the silken slaves of pleasure,
Or fettered in their fears.
And. I apprehend you.
No doubt, a base submission to our wrongs
May well be termed a voluntary bondage;
But think the heavy hand of power is on us;
Of power, from whose imprisonment and chains
Not all our free-born virtue can protect us.
Gust. 'Tis there you err, for I have felt their force;
And had I yielded to enlarge these limbs,
Or share the tyrant's empire, on the terms
Which he proposed—I were a slave indeed.
No—in the deep and deadly damp of dungeons
The soul can rear her sceptre, smile in anguish,
And triumph o'er oppression.
And. O glorious spirit! think not I am slack
To relish what thy noble scope intends;
But then the means! the peril! and the consequence!
Great are the odds, and who shall dare the trial?
Gust. I dare.
O wert thou still that gallant chief,
Whom once I knew! I could unfold a purpose
Would make the greatness of thy heart to swell,
And burst in the conception.
And. Give it utterance.
Perhaps there lie some embers yet in Sweden,
Which, wakened by thy breath, might rise in flames,
And spread vindictive round—You say you know me;
But give a tongue to such a cause as this,
And, if you hold me tardy in the call,
You know me not—But thee I've surely known;
For there is somewhat in that voice and form,
Which has alarmed my soul to recollection;
But 'tis as in a dream, and mocks my reach.
Gust. Then name the man whom it is death to know,
Or knowing to conceal—and I am he.

And. Gustavus! Heavens! 'tis he! 'tis he himself!

Enter ARVIDA, *speaking to a servant.*

Arv. I thank you, friend, he's here, you may retire.

And. Good morning to my noble guest; you're early! [*Gustavus walks apart.*

Arv. I come to take a short and hasty leave:
'Tis said, that from the mountain's neighbouring brow,
The canvas of a thousand tents appears,
Whitening the vale—Suppose the tyrant there;
You know my safety lies not in the interview—
Ha! What is he, who in the shreds of slavery
Supports a step, superior to the state
And insolence of ermine?

Gust. Sure that voice,
Was once the voice of friendship and Arvida!

Arv. Ha! Yes——'tis he!—ye powers! it is Gustavus.

Gust. Thou brother of adoption! In the bond
Of every virtue wedded to my soul,
Enter my heart! it is thy property.

Arv. I'm lost in joy and wond'rous circumstance.

Gust. Yet, wherefore, my Arvida, wherefore is it,
That in a place, and at a time like this,
We should thus meet? Can Cristiern cease from cruelty?
Say, whence is this, my brother? How escaped you?
Did I not leave thee in the Danish dungeon?

Arv. Of that hereafter. Let me view thee first.
How graceful is the garb of wretchedness,
When worn by virtue! Fashions turn to folly;
Their colours tarnish, and their pomps grow poor
To her magnificence.

Gust. Yes, my Arvida.
Beyond the sweeping of the proudest train,
That shades a monarch's heel, I prize these weeds,
For they are sacred to my country's freedom.
A mighty enterprize has been conceived,
And thou art come auspicious to the birth,
As sent to fix the seal of Heaven upon it.

Arv. Point but thy purpose——let it be to bleed———

Gust. Your hands, my friends!

All. Our hearts.

Gust. I know they're brave.
Of such the time has need; of hearts like yours,
Faithful and firm, of hands inured and strong;
For we must ride upon the neck of danger,
And plunge into a purpose big with death.

And. Here let us kneel, and bind us to thy side,
By all———

Gust. No, hold—if we want oaths to join us,
Swift let us part, from pole to pole asunder.
A cause like ours is its own sacrament;
Truth, justice, reason, love, and liberty,
The eternal links that clasp the world, are in it,
And he, who breaks their sanction, breaks all law,
And infinite connection.

Arn. True, my lord.

And. And such the force I feel.

Arv. And I.

All. And all.

Gust. Know then, that ere our royal Stenon fell,
While thus my valiant cousin and myself,
By chains and treachery, lay detained in Denmark,
Upon a dark and unsuspected hour
The bloody Cristiern sought to take my head.
Thanks to the ruling power, within whose eye
Imbosomed ills and mighty treasons roll,
Prevented of their blackness, I escaped,
Led by a generous arm, and some time lay
Concealed in Denmark—for my forfeit head
Became the price of crowns, each port and path
Was shut against my passage—'till I heard
That Stenon, valiant Stenon, fell in battle,
And freedom was no more. O then, what bounds
Had power to hem the desperate! I o'erpassed them,
Traversed all Sweden, through ten thousand foes,
Impending perils, and surrounding tongues,
That from himself enquired Gustavus out.
Witness my country, how I toiled to wake
Thy sons to liberty! In vain—for fear,
Cold fear had seized on all—Here last I came,
And shut me from the sun, whose hateful beams
Served but to shew the ruins of my country.
When here, my friends, 'twas here at length I found,
What I had left to look for, gallant spirits,
In the rough form of untaught peasantry.

And. Indeed they once were brave; our Dalecarlians
Have oft been known to give a law to kings;
And as their only wealth has been their liberty,
From all the unmeasured graspings of ambition
Have held that gem untouched—though now 'tis feared——

Gust. It is not feared—I say they still shall hold it.
I've searched these men, and find them like the soil,
Barren without, and to the eye unlovely,
But they've their mines within; and this the day
In which I mean to prove them.

Arn. O Gustavus!
Most aptly hast thou caught the passing hour,
Upon whose critical and fated hinge
The state of Sweden turns.

Gust. And to this hour
I've therefore held me in this darksome womb,
That sends me forth as to a second birth
Of freedom, or through death to reach eternity.
This day, returned with every circling year,
In thousands pours the mountain peasants forth,
Each with his battered arms and rusty helm,

In sportive discipline well trained, and prompt
Against the day of peril—thus disguised,
Already have I stirred their latent sparks
Of slumbering virtue, apt as I could wish,
To warm before the lightest breath of liberty.
Arn. How will they kindle when, confessed to view,
Once more their loved Gustavus stands before them,
And pours his blaze of virtues on their souls!
Arv. It cannot fail.
And. It has a glorious aspect.
Arv. Now Sweden! rise and re-assert thy rights,
Or be for ever fallen.
And. Then be it so.
Arn. Lead on, thou arm of war,
To death or victory!
Gust. Let us embrace.
Why thus, my friends, thus joined in such a cause,
Are we not equal to a host of slaves!
You say the foe's at hand—Why let them come,
Steep are our hills, nor easy of access,
And few the hours we ask for their reception.
For I will take these rustic sons of liberty
In the first warmth and hurry of their souls;
And should the tyrant then attempt our heights,
He comes upon his fate—Arise, thou sun!
Haste, haste to rouse thee to the call of liberty,
That shall once more salute thy morning beam,
And hail thee to thy setting!
Arn. O blessed voice!
Prolong that note but one short day through Sweden,
And though the sun and life should set together,
It matters not—we shall have lived that day.
Arv. Were it not worth the hazard of a life
To know if Cristiern leads his powers in person,
And what his scope intends? Be mine that task;
Even to the tyrant's tent I'll win my way,
And mingle with his councils.
Gust. Go, my friend.
Dear as thou art, whene'er our country calls,
Friends, sons, and sires should yield their treasure up,
Nor own a sense beyond the public safety.
But tell me, my Arvida, ere thou goest,
Tell me what hand has made thy friend its debtor,
And given thee up to freedom and Gustavus?
Arv. Ha! let me think of that! 'tis sure she loves him. [*Aside.*
Away, thou 'skance and jaundiced eye of jealousy,
That tempts my soul to sicken at perfection!
Away! I will unfold it——To thyself
Arvida owes his freedom.
Gust. How, my friend?
Arv. Some months are passed since in the Danish dungeon,
With care emaciate, and unwholsome damps
Sickening, I lay, chained to my flinty bed,
And called on death to ease me—strait a light
Shone round, as when the ministry of heaven
Descends to kneeling saints. But O! the form
That poured upon my sight—Ye angels speak!
For ye alone are like her; or present
Such visions pictured to the nightly eye
Of fancy, tranced in bliss. She then approached,
The softest pattern of embodied meekness—
For pity had divinely touched her eye,
And harmonized her motions——'Ah,' she cried,
'Unhappy stranger, art not thou the man,
'Whose virtues have endeared thee to Gustavus?'
Gust. Gustavus did she say?
Arv. Yes, yes, her lips
Breathed forth that name with a peculiar sweetness.
Loosed from my bonds, I rose, at her command,
When, scarce recovering speech, I would have kneeled;
But 'Haste thee, haste thee for thy life,' she cried;
'And O, if e'er thy envied eyes behold
'Thy loved Gustavus, say, a gentle foe
'Has given thee to his friendship.'
Gust. You've much amazed me! Is her name a secret?
Arv. To me it is——but you perhaps may guess.
Gust. No, on my word.
Arv. You too had your deliverer.
Gust. A kind, but not a fair one——Well, my friends!
Our cause is ripe, and calls us forth to action.
Tread ye not lighter? Swells not every breast
With ampler scope to take your country in,
And breathe the cause of virtue? Rise, ye Swedes!
Rise, greatly equal to this hour's importance.
On us the eyes of future ages wait,
And this day's arm strikes forth decisive fate;
This day, that shall for ever sink——or save;
And make each Swede a monarch——or a slave.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The camp.*

Enter CRISTIERN, *Attendants, &c.* TROLLIO *meets him.*

Troll. ALL hail, most mighty of the thrones of Europe!
The morn salutes thee with auspicious brightness,
No vapour frowns prophetic on her brow,
But the clear sun, who travels with thy arms,
Still smiles, attendant on thy growing greatness:
His evening eye shall see thee peaceful lord
Of all the north, of utmost Scandinavia;
Whence thou may'st pour thy conquests o'er the earth,
'Till farther India glows beneath thy empire,
And Lybia knows no regal name but yours.
Crist. Yes, Trollio, I confess the godlike thirst,
Ambition, that would drink a sea of glory.
But what from Dalecarlia?
Troll. Late last night,
I sent a trusty slave to Peterson,
And hourly wait some tidings.
Crist. Think you—Sure
The wretches will not dare such quick perdition.
Troll. I think they will not—Though of old I know them
All born to broils, the very sons of tumult;
Waste is their wealth, and mutiny their birthright,
And this the yearly fever of their blood,
Their holiday of war; a day apart,
Torn out from peace, and sacred to rebellion.
Oft has their battle hung upon the brow
Of yon wild steep, a living cloud of mischiefs,
Pregnant with plagues, and emptied on the heads
Of many a monarch.
Crist. Monarchs they were not,
Pageants of wax, the mouldings of the populace,
Tame paultry idols, sceptred up for shew,
And garnished into royalty—No, Trollio;
Kings should be felt, if they would find obedience;
The beast has sense enough to know his rider;
When the knee trembles, and the hand grows slack,
He casts for liberty: but bends and turns
For him that leaps with boldness on his back,
And spurs him to the bit.

Enter a Gentleman Usher, and several Peasants, who kneel and bow at a distance.

Crist. What slaves are those?
Gent. My gracious liege, your subjects.
Crist. Whence?
Gent. Of Sweden.
From Angermannia, from Helsingia some,
Some from the Gemtian and Nerician provinces.
Crist. Their business.
Gent. They come to speak their griefs.
Crist. Their griefs! their insolence!
Is not the camel mute beneath his burden?
Were they not born to bear? Away!——hold! come,
What would these murmurers?
Gent. Most royal Cristiern,
They say they have but one—one gracious king,
And yet are bowed beneath a host of tyrants,
Task-masters, soldiers, gatherers of subsidies,
All officers of rapine, rape, and murder;
Will-doing potentates, the lords of licence,
Who weigh their sweat and blood, and heavier shame,
Even as a feather puffed away in sport,
The pastime of a gale.
Crist. I'll hear no more.
I know ye, well I know ye, ye base supplicants!
Fear is the only worship of your souls;
And ever where ye hate, ye yield obeisance.
Wretches! shall I go poring on the earth,
Lest my imperial foot should tread on emmets?
Is it for you I must controul my soldiers,
And coop my eagles from their carrion? No—
Are ye not commoners, vile things in nature,
Poor priceless peasants? Slaves can know no property:
Out of my sight! [*Exeunt Peasants.*

Enter ARVIDA *guarded, and a Gentleman.*

Arv. Now, Fate, I'm caught, and what remains is obvious.
Gent. A prisoner, good my lord.
Crist. When taken?
Gent. Now, even here, before your tent;
I marked his careless action, but his eye
Of studied observation——then his port
And base attire, ill suiting——I enquired,
But found he was a stranger.
Crist. Ha! observe.
(Damned affectation) what a sullen scorn
Knits up his brow, and frowns upon our presence.
What—ay—thou wouldst be thought a mystery,
Some greatness in eclipse. Whence art thou, slave?
Silent! Nay, then—Bring forth the torture there—
A smile! Damnation!—How the wretch assumes
The wreck of state, the suffering soul of majesty!
What! have we no pre-eminence, no claim?
Dost thou not know thy life is in our power?
Arv. 'Tis therefore I despise it.
Crist. Matchless insolence!
What art thou? Speak!
Arv. Be sure no friend to thee;
For I'm a foe to tyrants.
Crist. Fiends and fire!——
A whirlwind tear thee, most audacious traitor!
Arv. Do, rage and chafe; thy wrath's beneath me, Cristiern.

How poor thy power, how empty is thy happiness,
When such a wretch, as I appear to be,
Can ride thy temper, harrow up thy form,
And stretch thy soul upon the rack of passion!
Crist. I'll know thee—I will know thee! Bear him hence!
Why, what are kings, if slaves can brave us thus?
Go, Trollio, hold him to the rack—Tear, search him,
Prove him through every poignance, sting him deep!
[*Exit Trollio with Arvida guarded.*

Enter a Messenger, as in haste.

Crist. What wouldst thou, fellow?
Mess. O my sovereign lord,
I am come fast and far, from even till morn,
Five times I've crossed the shade of sleepless night,
Impatient of thy presence.
Crist. Whence?
Mess. From Denmark;
Commended from the consort of thy throne
To speed and privacy.
Crist. Your words would taste of terror—Wretch, speak out,
Nor dare to tremble here—For, didst thou bear
Thy tidings from a thousand leagues around,
Unmoved, I move the whole, the cent'ring nave,
Where turns that mighty circle—Speak thy message.
Mess. A secret malady, my gracious liege,
Some factious vapour, risen from off the skirts
Of southmost Norway, has diffused its bane,
And rages now within the heart of Denmark.
Crist. It must not, cannot, 'tis impossible!
What, my own Danes! Nay, then, the world wants weeding.
I will not bear it—Hell! I'd rather see
This earth a desert, desolate and wild,
And, like the lion, stalk my lonely round,
Famished and roaring for my prey——Call Trollio!
I'll have men studied, deeply read in mischiefs.

Enter a Servant, who kneels and delivers a letter.

Crist. From whom?
Serv. From Peterson.
Crist. To Trollio—Right. [*Reads.*
How's this?—Be gone——
Go all—without there—wait my pleasure.
O curse! How hell has timed its plagues!

Enter TROLLIO.

Crist. Come near, my Trollio.
We've heard ill news from Denmark—that's a trifle——
But here's to blast thy eyes—read——
Troll. Ha! Gustavus!
So near us, and in arms!
Crist. What's to be done? Now, Trollio, now's the time
To subtilize thy soul, sound every depth,
And waken all the wondrous statesman in thee.
For I must tell thee, (spite of pride and royalty,
Of guarding armies, and of circling nations,
That bend beneath my nod) this cursed Gustavus
Invades my sinking spirits, awes my heart,
And sits upon my slumbers—All in vain
Has he been daring, and have I been vigilant;
Spite of himself he still evades the hunter,
And, if there's power in heaven or hell, it guards him.
When was I vanquished, but when he opposed me?
When have I conquered, but when he was absent?
His name's a host, a terror to my legions;
And by my tripled crown, I swear, Gustavus,
I'd rather meet all Europe for my foe,
Than see thy face in arms!
Troll. Be calm, my liege,
And listen to a secret big with consequence,
That gives thee back the second man on earth,
Whose valour could plant fears around thy throne:
Thy prisoner——
Crist. What of him?
Troll. The prince Arvida.
Crist. How!
Troll. The same.
Crist. My royal fugitive?
Troll. Most certain.
Crist. Now, then, 'tis plain who sent him hither.
Troll. Yes.
Pray give me leave, my lord—a thought comes cross me—
If so he must be ours—— [*Pauses.*
Your pardon for a question—Has Arvida
E'er seen your beauteous daughter, your Cristina?
Crist. Never—yes—possibly he might, that day
When the proud pair, Gustavus and Arvida,
Through Copenhagen drew a length of chain,
And graced my chariot wheels—but why the question?
Troll. I'll tell you. While even now he stood before us,
I marked his high demeanour, and my eye
Claimed some remembrance of him, though in clouds
Doubtful and distant; but a nearer view
Renewed the characters effaced by absence.
Yet, lest he might presume upon a friendship
Of ancient league between us, I dissembled,
Nor seemed to know him—On he proudly strode,
As who should say, back, Fortune, know thy distance!
Thus steadily he passed, and mocked his fate.
When, lo! the princess to her morning walk
Came forth attended—quick amazement seized
Arvida at the sight; his steps took root,

A tremor shook him; and his altering cheek
Now sudden flushed, then fled its wonted colour;
While with an eager and intemperate look
He bent his form, and hung upon her beauties.
Crist. Ha! Did our daughter note him?
Troll. No, my lord;
She passed regardless—Strait his pride fell from him,
And at her name he started.
Then heaved a sigh, and cast a look to Heaven,
Of such a mute, yet eloquent emotion,
As seemed to say, Now, Fate, thou hast prevailed,
And found one way to triumph o'er Arvida!
Crist. But whither would this lead?
Troll. List, list, my lord!
While thus his soul's unseated, shook by passion,
Could we engage him to betray Gustavus——
Crist. O empty hope! Impossible, my Trollio.
Do I not know him, and the cursed Gustavus?
Both fixed in resolution deep as hell,
And proud as high Olympus!
Troll. Ah, my liege,
No mortal footing treads so firm in virtue,
As always to abide the slippery path,
Nor deviate with the bias. Some have few,
But each man has his failing, some defect
Wherein to slide temptation—Leave him to me.
Crist. I know thou hast a serpentizing genius,
Canst wind the subtlest mazes of the soul,
And trace her wanderings to the source of action.
If thou canst bend this proud one to our purpose,
And make the lion crouch, 'tis well—if not,
Away at once, and sweep him from remembrance.
Troll. Then I must promise deep.
Crist. Ay, any thing; out-bid ambition.
Troll. Love?
Crist. Ha! Yes—our daughter too—if she can bribe him:
But then to win him to betray his friend?
Troll. O doubt it not, my lord—for if he loves,
As sure he greatly does, I have a stratagem
That holds the certainty of fate within it.
Love is a passion whose effects are various;
It ever brings some change upon the soul,
Some virtue, or some vice, till then unknown;
Degrades the hero, and makes cowards valiant.
Crist. True, when it pours upon a youthful temper,
Open and apt to take the torrent in;
It owns no limits, no restraint it knows,
But sweeps all down, though Heaven and hell oppose;
Even virtue rears in vain her sacred mound,
Razed in its rage, or in its swellings drowned.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Opens, and discovers Arvida *in chains; Guards preparing instruments of death and torture. He advances in confusion.*

Arv. Off, off, vain cumbrance, ye conflicting thoughts!
Leave me to Heaven. O peace!—It will not be—
Just when I rose above mortality,
To pour her wondrous weight of charms upon me!
At such a time, it was, it was too much!
To pluck the soaring pinion of my soul,
While, eagle-eyed, she held her flight to Heaven,
O'er pain and death triumphant! Help, ye saints,
Angelic ministers descend, descend,
And lift me to myself! hold, bind my heart
Firm and unshaken in the approaching ruin,
The wreck of earth-born frailty! and, O Heaven,
For every pang these tortured limbs shall feel,
Descend, in ten-fold blessings, on Gustavus!
Yes, bless him, bless him! Crown his hours with joy,
His head with glory, and his arms with conquest;
Set his firm foot upon the neck of tyrants,
And be his name the balm of every lip
That breathes through Sweden! Worthiest to be styled
Their friend, their chief, their father, and their king!

Enter Trollio.

Troll. Unbind your prisoner.
Arv. How?
Troll. You have your liberty,
And may depart unquestioned.
Arv. Do not mock me.
It is not to be thought, while power remains,
That Cristiern wants a reason to be cruel.
But let him know I would not be obliged.
He, who accepts the favours of a tyrant,
Shares in his guilt; they leave a stain behind them.
Troll. You wrong the native temper of his soul;
Cruel of force, but never of election:
Prudence compelled him to a shew of tyranny;
Howe'er, those politics are now no more,
And mercy, in her turn, shall shine on Sweden.
Arv. Indeed! It were a strange, a blessed reverse,
Devoutly to be wished! but then the cause,
The cause, my lord, must surely be uncommon.
May I presume?
Perhaps a secret.
Troll. No——or if it were,
The boldness of thy spirit claims respect,
And should be answered. Know, the only man,
In whom our monarch ever knew repulse,
Is now our friend; that terror of the field,
The invincible Gustavus.
Arv. Ha! Friend to Cristiern? Guard thyself, my heart! [*Aside.*
Nor seem to take alarm——Why, good my lord,
What terror is there in a wretch proscribed,
Naked of means, and distant as Gustavus?
Troll. There you mistake——Nor knew we till this hour

The danger was so near——From yonder hill
He sends proposals, backed with all the powers
Of Dalecarlia, those licentious resolutes,
Who, having nought to hazard in the wreck,
Are ever foremost to foment a storm.
Arv. I were too bold to question on the terms.
Troll. No—trust me, valiant man, whoe'er thou art,
I would do much to win a worth like thine,
By any act of service, or of confidence.
The terms Gustavus claims, indeed, are haughty;
The freedom of his mother and his sister,
His forfeit province, Gothland, and the isles,
Submitted to his sceptre——But the league,
The bond of amity, and lasting friendship,
Is, that he claims Cristina for his bride.
You start, and seem surprised.
Arv. A sudden pain
Just struck athwart my breast——But say, my lord,
I thought you named Cristina.
Troll. Yes.
Arv. O torture! [*Aside.*
What of her, my good lord?
Troll. I said, Gustavus claimed her for his bride.
Arv. His bride! his wife!
You did not mean his wife! Do fiends feel thus? [*Aside.*
Down, heart, nor tell thy anguish! Pray excuse me;
Did you not say, the princess was his wife?
Whose wife, my lord?
Troll. I did not say what was, but what must be.
Arv. Touching Gustavus, was it not?
Troll. The same.
Arv. His bride!
Troll. I say his bride, his wife; his loved Cristina!
Cristina, fancied in the very prime
And youthful smile of nature; formed for joys
Unknown to mortals. You seem indisposed.
Arv. The crime of constitution—Oh Gustavus! [*Aside.*
This is too much!—And think you then, my lord—
What, will the royal Cristiern e'er consent
To match his daughter with his deadliest foe?
Troll. What should he do? War else must be eternal.
Besides, some rumours from his Danish realms
Make peace essential here.
Arv. Yes, peace has sweets,
That Hybla never knew; it sleeps on down,
Culled gently from beneath the cherub's wing;
No bed for mortals——man is warfare——all
A hurricane within; yet friendship stoops,
And gilds the gloom with falsehood, smiles, and varnish!
For still the storm grows high, and then no shore!
No rock to split on! 'Twere a kind perdition
To sink ten thousand fathom at a plunge,
And fasten on oblivion——there we hold,
And all is—— [*Faints.*
Troll. Help, bear him up. O potency of love,
That plucks this noble fabric from his base!
Bend, bend him forward——He revives——How fare you?
Arv. I know not—yet a dagger were most friendly.
Return me, Trollio, O return me back
To death, to racks! Undone, undone Arvida!
Troll. Is't possible, my lord! the prince Arvida!
My friend! [*Embraces him.*
Arv. Confusion to the name! [*Turns.*
Troll. Why this, good Heaven? And wherefore thus disguised?
Arv. Yes, that accomplished traitor, that Gustavus,
While he sat planning private scenes of happiness,
O well dissembled! He, he sent me hither;
My friendly, unsuspecting heart a sacrifice,
To make death sure, and rid him of a rival.
Troll. A rival! Do you then love Cristiern's daughter?
Arv. Name her not, Trollio; since she can't be mine:
Gustavus! how, ah! how hast thou deceived me!
Who could have looked for falsehood from thy brow,
Whose heavenly arch was as the throne of virtue!
Thy eye appeared a sun to cheer the world,
Thy bosom truth's fair palace, and thy arms,
Benevolent, the harbour for mankind.
Troll. What's to be done? Believe me, valiant prince,
I know not which most sways me to thy interests,
My love to thee, or hatred to Gustavus.
Arv. Would you then save me? Think, contrive it quickly!
Lend me your troops—by all the powers of vengeance,
Myself will face this terror of the north,
This son of fame—this—O Gustavus—What?
Where had I wandered?—Stab my bleeding country!
Save, shield me from that thought.
Troll. Retire, my lord;
For see, the princess comes.
Arv. Where, Trollio, where?
Ha! Yes, she comes indeed! her beauties drive
Time, place, and truth, and circumstance before them!
Perdition pleases there—pull—tear me from her!
Yet must I gaze—but one—but one look more,
And I were lost for ever. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

Enter CRISTINA, MARIANA, *and attendants.*

Cristina. Forbid it, shame! Forbid it, virgin modesty!
No, no, my friend, Gustavus ne'er shall know it.
O I am over-paid with conscious pleasure;
The sense but to have saved that wond'rous man,

Is still a smiling cherub in my breast,
And whispers peace within.
Mar. 'Tis strange a man, of his high note and consequence,
Should so evade the busy search of thousands,
That six long months have shut him from enquiry,
And not an eye can trace him to his covert.
Cristina. Once 'twas not so; each infant lisped, Gustavus!
It was the favourite name of every language.
His slightest motions filled the world with tidings;
Waked he, or slept, fame watched the important hour,
And nations told it round.
Mar. I've heard, my princess,
What time Gustavus lay detained in Denmark,
Your royal father sought the hero's friendship,
And offered ample terms of peace and amity.
Cristina. He did; he offered that, my Mariana,
For which contending monarchs sued in vain:
He offered me, his darling, his Cristina;
But I was slighted, slighted by a captive,
Though kingdoms swelled my dower.
Mar. Amazement fix me!
Rejected by Gustavus!
Cristina. Yes, Mariana; but rejected nobly.
Not worlds could win him to betray his country!
Had he consented, I had then despised him.
What's all the gaudy glitter of a crown?
What, but the glaring meteor of ambition,
That leads a wretch benighted in his errors,
Points to the gulf, and shines upon destruction.
Mar. You wrong your charms, whose power might reconcile
Things opposite in nature—Had he seen you!—
Cristina. He has, my Mariana, he has seen me.
I'll tell thee—yet while inexpert of years,
I heard of bloody spoils, the waste of war,
And dire conflicting man; Gustavus' name
Superior rose, still dreadful in the tale:
Then first he seized my infancy of soul,
As somewhat fabled of gigantic fierceness,
Too huge for any form; he scared my sleep,
And filled my young idea. Not the boast
Of all his virtues, graces only known
To him, and heavenly natures! could erase
The strong impression; 'till that wondrous day
In which he met my eyes. But O, O Heaven!
O love, and all ye cordial powers of passion!
What then was my amazement! he was chained,
Was chained, my Mariana! Like the robes
Of coronation, worn by youthful kings,
He drew his shackles. The Herculean nerve
Braced his young arm; and, softened in his cheek,
Lived more than woman's sweetness! Then his eye!
His mein! his native dignity! He looked,
As though he led captivity in chains,
And all were slaves around.
Mar. Did he observe you?
Cristina. He did: for as I trembled, looked, and sighed,
His eyes met mine; he fixed their glories on me.
Confusion thrilled me then, and secret joy,
Fast throbbing, stole its treasures from my heart,
And, mantling upward, turned my face to crimson.
I wished—but did not dare to look—he gazed;
When sudden, as by force, he turned away,
And would no more behold me.

Enter LAERTES.

Laer. Ah, bright imperial maid! my royal mistress!
Cristina. What wouldst thou say? Thy looks speak terror to me.
Laer. O you are ruined, sacrificed, undone!
I heard it all; your cruel, cruel father
Has sold you, given you up a spoil to treason,
The purchase of the noblest blood on earth——
Gustavus!
Cristina. Ah! What of him? Where, where is he?
Laer. In Dalecarlia, on some great design,
Doomed in an hour to fall by faithless hands:
His friend, the brave, the false, deceived Arvida,
Even now prepares to lead a band of ruffians
Beneath the winding covert of the hill,
And seize Gustavus, obvious to the snares
Of friendship's fair dissemblance. And your father
Has vowed your beauties to Arvida's arms,
The purchase of his falsehood.
Cristina. Shield me, Heaven!
First duty, break thy filial bands in sunder,
And blot the name of parent from the world!
Is there no lett, no means of quick prevention?
Laer. Behold my life still chained to thy direction;
My will shall have a wing for every word,
That breathes thy mandate.
Cristina. Will you, good Laertes?
Alas, I fear to overtask thy friendship;
Say, will you save me then—O go, haste, fly!
Acquaint Gustavus—if, if he must fall,
Let hosts that hem this single lion in,
Let nations hunt him down—let him fall nobly.
Laer. I go, my princess—Heaven direct me to him! [*Exit.*
Cristina. I would pray too, to save me from pollution;
Detested stain, the touch of the betrayer!
But mighty love the partial prayer arrests,
And leaves me only anxious for Gustavus.
For him cold fears my fainting bosom chill,
His cares distract me, and his dangers kill;
Ye powers! if deaf to all the vows I make,
Yet shield Gustavus, for Gustavus' sake;
Protect his virtues from a faithless foe,
And save your only image, left below!

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Mountains of Dalecarlia.*

Enter GUSTAVUS, *as a peasant, Dalecarlians following.*

Gust. YE men of Sweden, wherefore are ye come?
See ye not yonder, how the locusts swarm,
To drink the fountains of your honour up,
And leave your hills a desert—Wretched men!
Why came ye forth! Is this a time for sport?
Or are ye met with song and jovial feast,
To welcome your new guests, your Danish visitants?
To stretch your supple necks beneath their feet,
And fawning lick the dust?—Go, go, my countrymen,
Each to your several mansions; trim them out;
Cull all the tedious earnings of your toil
To purchase bondage—Bid your blooming daughters,
And your chaste wives, to spread their beds with softness;
Then go ye forth, and with your proper hands
Conduct your masters in; conduct the sons
Of lust and violation—O Swedes, Swedes!
Heavens! are ye men, and will ye suffer this?

Enter ARNOLDUS, *who talks apart with* GUSTAVUS.

1*st Dale.* How my blood boils!
2*d Dale.* Who is this honest spokesman?
3*d Dale.* What, know ye not Rodolphus of the mines?
A better labourer ne'er struck steel to stone.
Gust. There was a time, my friends! a glorious time!
When, had a single man of your forefathers
Upon the frontier met a host in arms,
His courage scarce had turned; himself had stood,
Alone had stood the bulwark of his country.
Your sires were known but by their manly fronts;
On their black brows, enthroned, sat Liberty,
The awe of honour, and contempt of death.
1*st Dale.* We are not bastards.
2*d Dale.* No.
3*d Dale.* We're Dalecarlians.
Gust. Come, come ye on then: Here I take my stand!
Here on the brink, the very verge of liberty;
Although contention rise upon the clouds,
Mix heaven with earth, and roll the ruin onward;
Here will I fix, and breast me to the shock,
'Till I, or Denmark, fall.
Siv. And who art thou,
That thus wouldst swallow all the glory up
That should redeem the times? Behold this breast!
The sword has tilled it; and the stripes of slaves
Shall ne'er trace honour here; shall never blot
The fair inscription——Never shall the cords
Of Danish insolence bind down these arms,
That bore my royal master from the field.
Gust. Ha! Say you, brother? Were you there———O grief!
Where liberty and Stenon fell together?
Siv. Yes, I was there———A bloody field it was,
Where Conquest gasped, and wanted breath to tell,
Its o'er-toiled triumph. There, our bleeding king,
There Stenon on this bosom made his bed,
And rolling back his dying eyes upon me—
'Soldier,' he cried, 'if e'er it be thy lot
'To see my valiant cousin, great Gustavus,
'Tell him——for once, that I have fought like him,
'And would like him have———
Conquered—he should have said—but there, O there,
Death stopt him short!
Gust. Come to my arms, and let me hide thy tears,
For I have caught their softness——O Danes, Danes!
You shall weep blood for this. Shall they not, brother?
Yes, we will deal our might with thrifty vengeance,
A life for every blow! and, when we fall,
There shall be weight in it; like the tottering towers,
That draw contiguous ruin.
Siv. Brave, brave man!
My soul admires thee———By my father's spirit,
I would not barter such a death as this
For immortality! Nor we alone——
Here be the trusty gleanings of that field
Where last we fought for freedom; here's rich poverty,
Though wrapped in rags; my fifty brave companions—
Who, through the force of fifteen thousand foes,
Bore off their king, and saved his great remains.
Gust. Give me your hands, those valiant hands—Why, captain,
We could but die alone; with these we'll conquer.
My fellow-labourers, too——What say ye, friends?
Shall we not strike for it?
All. Death! Victory or death!
No bonds, no bonds!
Arn. Spoke like yourselves—Ye men of Dalecarlia,
Brave men and bold! whom every future age,
Tongues, nations, languages, and rolls of fame,
Shall mark for wondrous deeds, achievements won
From honour's dangerous summit, warriors all!

Say, might ye choose a chief, for high exploits,
From the first annal, to the latest praise
That breathes a hero's name—Speak, name the man
Who then should meet your wish?
Siv. Forbear the theme.
Why wouldst thou seek to sink us with the weight
Of grievous recollection? O Gustavus!
Could the dead wake, thou wert that man of men,
First of the foremost!
Gust. Didst thou know Gustavus?
Siv. Know him! O Heaven! what else, who else, was worth
The knowledge of a soldier? That great day,
When Cristiern, in his third attempt on Sweden,
Had summed his powers, and weighed the scale of fight;
On the bold brink, the very push of conquest,
Gustavus rushed, and bore the battle down,
In his full sway of prowess, like leviathan
That scoops his foaming progress on the main,
And drives the shoals along. Forward I sprung,
All emulous, and labouring to attend him;
Fear fled before, behind him Rout grew loud,
And distant Wonder gazed———At length he turned,
And having eyed me with a wondrous look
Of sweetness mixed with glory—grace inestimable!
He plucked this bracelet from his conquering arm,
And bound it here—My wrist seemed treble nerved;
My heart spoke to him; and I did such deeds
As best might thank him—But from that blessed day
I never saw him more——Yet, still, to this
I bow, as to the relicks of my saint:
Each morn I drop a tear on every bead,
Count all the glories of Gustavus o'er,
And think I still behold him.
Gust. Rightly thought;
For so thou dost, my soldier.
Give me my arms—Off, off ye dark disguises!
For I will be myself. Behold your general,
Gustavus! Come once more to lead ye on
To laurelled victory, to fame, to freedom!
1st Dale. Is it?
2d Dale. Yes.
3d Dale. No.
4th Dale. 'Tis he!
5th Dale. 'Tis he!
6th Dale. 'Tis he! [*A shout.*
Siv. Strike me, ye powers!——It is illusion all! It cannot.
Gust. What! no nearer?
Siv. It is! It is! [*Falls and embraces his knees.*
Gust. O speechless eloquence!
Rise to my arms, my friend.
Siv. Friend! said you, friend?
O my heart's lord! My conqueror! my——
Gust. Approach, my fellow soldiers! your Gustavus
Claims no precedence here: Friendship like mine
Throws all respect behind it—'tis enough
I read your joys, your transports in your eyes;
And would, O, would I had a life to spend,
For every soldier here! whose every life's
Far dearer than my own; dearer than aught,
Except your liberty, except your honour.
Perish Gustavus, ere this sacred sun,
That lights the rest of Sweden to their shame,
Should blush upon your chains! why said I chains!
To souls like yours, I should have talked of triumphs,
Empire, and fame, and hazards imminent,
Occasions wished for, glory—haste, brave men!
Collect your friends to join us on the instant;
Summon our brethren to their share of conquest,
And let loud Echo, from her circling hills,
Sound Freedom, 'till the undulation shake
The bound of utmost Sweden!
[*Exeunt Dalecarlians, crying Gustavus! Gustavus! Liberty!*

Enter ANDERSON.

And. There was a glorious sound!
Gust. Yes, Anderson,
The long-wished hour is come—the storm is up,
And wrecks will follow—Where they are to light
Let Heaven determine—Well, my noble friend,
Has Peterson set out?
And. He has, this instant;
And bears your packet to the tyrant's camp.
Gust. What think you of his zeal?
And. In truth, my lord,
It wears a gallant show.
Gust. 'Tis specious all,
Flash without fire, the lightning of a cloud
That carries darkness in the rear—For Peterson,
To spread my letters through the camp of Cristiern,
And seek for succours in the jaws of death,
It showed too bold, too much the flaming patriot.
Beside, I know him for the friend of Trollio.
And. Why would you then employ him?
Gust. There's the mystery.
'Tis not his faith, but treachery I trust to.
My letters are directed to the chiefs
Of those inglorious mercenary Swedes,
Whom Cristiern had seduced to join his host,
And turn the sword of conquest on their country;
To each of those I have addressed in terms
Of special correspondence, meant to rouse
The jealousy of Cristiern; as I think
My packet can't escape him. What ensues?
The tyrant hence concludes himself betrayed,
Sifts all his legions, thins the ranks of fight,
And leaves them open to our bold invasion.
But grant that Peterson deceive my aim,
And hold the rank of virtue; then the Swedes
May waken to the glorious call of honour.

So—every way it saves us from the guilt
Of Swedes encountering Swedes, and spares the blood
Of brethren, though revolted.
And. On my soul,
This is a stratagem that saps the miner,
Makes treason turn a traitor to itself,
And mock its own designs.
Gust. O noble friend, fast winds the great machine,
That strikes the fate of Sweden—Go, my Anderson,
Assemble all thy brave adherents round thee;
With warlike inspiration warm their souls,
And haste to join me here.
And. I will, my lord. [*Exit.*

Enter LAERTES.

Laer. Thy presence nobly speaks the man I wish. Gustavus!
Gust. Yes; thou hast a hostile garb—
Ha! say—Art thou Laertes? If I err not,
There is a friendly semblance in that face,
Which answers to a fond impression here,
And tells me I'm thy debtor——my deliverer!
Laer. No, valiant prince, you over-rate my service:
There is a worthier object of your gratitude
Whom yet you know not—Oh, I have to tell—
But then, to gain your credit, must unfold,
What haply should be secret——Be it so;
You are all honour.
Gust. Let me to thy mind!
For thou hast waked my soul into a thought
That holds me all attention.
Laer. Mightiest man!
To me alone you held yourself obliged
For life and liberty——Had it been so,
I were most blessed, with retribution just
To pay thee for my own—For on the day,
When by your arm the mighty Thraces fell,
Fate threw me to your sword—You spared my youth,
And, in the very whirl and rage of fight,
Your eye was taught compassion—from that hour
I vowed my life the slave of your remembrance;
And often, as Cristina, heavenly maid!
The mistress of my service, questioned me
Of wars and venturous deeds, my tidings came
Still freighted with thy name, until the day
In which yourself appeared, to make praise speechless.
Cristina saw you then, and on your fate
Dropped a kind tear; and when your noble scorn
Of proffered terms provoked her father's rage
To take the deadly forfeit; she, she only,
Whose virtues watched the precious hour of mercy,
All trembling, sent my secret hand to save you;
Where, through a pass unknown to all your keepers,
I led you forth, and gave you to your liberty.
Gust. O I am sunk, o'erwhelmed with wondrous goodness!
But were I rich and free as opening mines,
That team their golden wealth upon the world,
Still I were poor, unequal to her bounty.
Nor can I longer doubt whose generous arm,
In my Arvida, in my friend's deliverance,
Gave double life, and freedom to Gustavus.
Laer. A fatal present! Ah, you know him not;
Arvida is misled, undone by passion;
False to your friendship, to your trust unfaithful.
Gust. Ha! hold!
Laer. I must unfold it.
Gust. Yet forbear:
This way—I hear some footing—pray you soft—
If thou hast aught to urge against Arvida,
The man of virtue, tell it not the wind;
Lest slander catch the sound, and guilt should triumph. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

ARVIDA *entering speaks to a soldier.*

Arv. He's here——bear back your orders to your fellows,
That not a man, on peril of his life,
Advance in sight 'till called.
Sold. My lord, I will.
Arv. Have I not vowed it, faithless as he is,
Have I not vowed his fall! Yet, good Heaven!
Why start these sudden tears? On, on I must,
For I am half way down the dizzy steep,
Where my brain turns—A draught of Lethe now—
O that the world would sleep—to wake no more!
Or that the name of friendship bore no charm
To make my nerve unsteady, and this steel
Fly backward from its task! It shall be done.
Empire! Cristina! though the affrighted sun
Start back with horror of the direful stroke,
It shall be done. Calm, calm the hell within,
Thy looks may else turn traitors—Ha, he comes!
How steadily he looks, as Heaven's own book,
The leaf of truth, were opened on his aspect.
Up, up, dark minister——his fate calls out
[*Puts up the dagger.*
To nobler execution; for he comes
In opposition, singly, man to man,
As though he braved my wish.

Enter GUSTAVUS.

[*They look for some time on each other—Arvida lays his hand on his sword, and withdraws it by turns—then advances irresolutely.*
Gust. Is it then so?
Arv. Defend thyself!
Gust. No! Strike!
I would unfold my bosom to thy sword,
But that I know the wound you give this breast
Would doubly pierce thy own.
Arv. I know thee not—
It is the time's eclipse, and what should be

In nature, now is nameless.
Gust. Ah, my brother!
Arv. What wouldst thou?
Gust. Is it thus we two should meet?
Arv. Art thou not false? Deep else, O deep indeed
Were my damnation!
Gust. Dear, unhappy man!
My heart bleeds for thee. False I had surely been,
Had I, like thee, been tempted.
Arv. Ha! speak, speak!
Didst thou not send to treat with Cristiern?
Gust. Never.
I know thy error, but I know the arts,
The frauds, the wiles that practised on thy virtue;
Firm how you stood, and towered above mortality;
'Till, in the fond unguarded hour of love,
The wily undermining Trollio came,
And won thee from thyself—a moment won thee;
For still thou art Arvida, still the man
On whom thy country calls for thy deliverance.
Already are her bravest sons in arms;
Hark how they shout, impatient for our presence,
To lead them on to a new life of liberty,
To fame, to conquest—Ha! Heaven guard my brother!
Thy cheek turns pale, thy eye is wild upon me!
Wilt thou not answer me?
Arv. Gustavus!
Gust. Speak.
Arv. Have I not dreamed?
Gust. No other I esteem it.
Where lives the man, whose reason slumbers not?
Still pure, still blameless, if at wonted dawn
Again he wakes to virtue.
Arv. O, my dawn
Must soon be dark. Confusion dissipates,
To leave me worse confounded.
Gust. Think no more on't.
Come to my arms, thou dearest of mankind!
Arv. Stand off! Pollution dwells within my touch,
And horrors hang around me—Cruel man!
O, thou hast doubly damned me with this goodness!
For resolution held the deed as done,
That now must sink me—Hark! I am summoned hence,
My audit opens! Poise me! for I stand
Upon a spire, against whose sightless base
Hell breaks his wave beneath. Down, down, I dare not,
And up I cannot look, for justice fronts me.——
Thou shalt have vengeance! though my purpling blood
Were nectar for Heaven's bowl, as warm and rich,
As now 'tis base, it thus should pour for pardon!
[*Gustavus catches his arm, and in the struggle the dagger falls.*
Gust. Ha! hold, Arvida!—Nō, I will not lose thee——
Forbid it heaven! thou shalt not rob me so.
No, I will struggle with thee to the last,
And save thee from thyself. Oh, answer me!
Wilt thou forsake me? Answer me, my brother,
My best Arvida!
Arv. I would speak to thee——
But let it be by silence——Oh, Gustavus!
Gust. Say but you'll live.
Arv. Oh!
Gust. For my sake.
Arv. Yes, take me;
Expose me, cage me, brand me for the tool
Of crafty villains, for the veriest slave,
On whom the bend of each contemptuous brow
Shall look with loathing! Ah, my turpitude
Shall be the vile comparative for knaves
To boast and whiten by!
Gust. Not so, not so.
Who knows no fault, my friend, knows no perfection.
The rectitude, that Heaven appoints to man,
Leads on through error; and the kindly sense
Of having strayed, endears the road to bliss;
It makes Heaven's way more pleasing. O, my brother!
'Tis hence a thousand cordial charities
Derive their growth, their vigour, and their sweetness.
This short lapse
Shall to thy future foot give cautious treading,
Erect, and firm, in virtue.
Arv. Give me leave. [*Offers to pass.*
Gust. You shall not pass.
Arv. I must.
Gust. Whither?
Arv. I know not——O Gustavus!
Gust. Speak.
Arv. You can't forgive me!
Gust. Not forgive thee!
Arv. No.
Look there! [*Points to the dagger.*
And yet, when I resolved to kill thee,
I could have died—indeed I could—for thee,
I could have died, Gustavus!
Gust. O! I know it.
A generous mind, though swayed awhile by passion,
Is like the steely vigour of the bow,
Still holds its native rectitude, and bends
But to recoil more forceful! Come, forget it.

Enter a Dalecarlian.

Dale. My lord, as now I passed the mountain's brow,
I spied some men, whose arms, and strange attire,
Give cause for circumspection.
Gust. Danes, perhaps;
Haste, intercept their passage to the camp.
[*Exit Dale.*

Arv. Those are the Danes that witness to my shame!
Gust. Perish the opprobrious term! Not so, Arvida;
Myself will be the guardian of thy fame;
Trust me, I will.—Our friends approach.—O clear,
While I attend them, clear that cloud, my brother,
That sits upon the morning of thy youth!
It hangs too near the heart of thy Gustavus.
[*Exit.*
Arv. Of thy Gustavus! O wretch, wretch, cursed wretch!
What is this time and place, and toys of circumstance,
That wind our actions so, as Heaven's own hand
What's done may not unravel?—Pardon may!—
There's the Lethean sweet, the snow of Heaven,
New blanching o'er the negro front of guilt,
That, to the eye of mercy, all appears
Fair as the unwritten page—yet, self-convict,
Though Heaven's free power should pardon, where's my peace?
Thus, thus to be driven out from my own breast!
To have no shed, no sheltering nook at home,
To take reflection in! How looks the wretch
Whose heart cries 'Villain' to itself? I'll not
Endure its battery—Something must be done,
Of high import, e'er night, that I may sleep,
Or wake for ever!

Enter GUSTAVUS, *followed by the Dalecarlians,* ANDERSON, ARNOLDUS, SIVARD, *Officers, &c.*

1*st Dale.* Let us all see him!
2*d Dale.* Yes, and hear him too.
3*d Dale.* Let us be sure 'tis he himself.
4*th Dale.* Our general.
5*th Dale.* And we will fight while weapons can be found.
6*th Dale.* Or hands to wield them.
7*th Dale.* Get on the bank, Gustavus.
And. Do, my lord.
Gust. My countrymen!———
1*st Dale.* Ho! hear him!
2*d Dale.* Peace!
3*d Dale.* Peace!
4*th Dale.* Peace!
Gust. Amazement, I perceive, hath filled your hearts,
And joy, for that your lost Gustavus, 'scaped,
Through wounds, imprisonments, and chains, and deaths,
Thus sudden, thus unlooked for, stands before ye!
As one escaped from cruel hands I come,
From hearts that ne'er knew pity; dark and vengeful!
Who quaff the tears of orphans, bathe in blood,
And know no music but the groans of Sweden!
Yet, not for that my sister's early innocence,
And mother's age, now grind beneath captivity;
Nor that one bloody, one remorseless hour,
Swept my great sire, and kindred, from my side;
For them Gustavus weeps not; though my eyes
Were far less dear, for them I will not weep.—
But, O great parent, when I think on thee!
Thy numberless, thy nameless, shameful infamies,
My widowed country! Sweden! when I think
Upon thy desolation, spite of rage——
And vengeance, that would choak them——tears will flow!
And. O, they are villains, every Dane of them,
Practised to stab and smile—to stab the babe
That smiles upon them!
Arn. What accursed hours
Roll o'er those wretches, who, to fiends like these,
In their dear liberty, have bartered more
Than worlds will rate for?
Gust. O Liberty! Heaven's choice prerogative!
True bond of law, thou social soul of property,
Thou breath of reason, life of life itself!
For thee the valiant bleed! O sacred Liberty!
Winged from the summer's snare, from flattering ruin,
Like the bold stork you seek the wintery shore,
Leave courts, and pomps, and palaces, to slaves,
Cleave to the cold, and rest upon the storm!
Upborn by thee, my soul disdained the terms
Of empire—offered at the hands of tyrants!
With thee, I sought this favourite soil; with thee,
These favourite sons I sought—thy sons, O Liberty!
For, even amid the wilds of life, you lead them,
Lift their low rafted cottage to the clouds,
Smile o'er their heaths, and from their mountain tops
Beam glory to the nations!
All. Liberty! Liberty!
Gust. Are ye not marked, ye men of Dalecarlia,
Are ye not marked, by all the circling world,
As the great stake, the last effort for liberty?
Say, is it not your wealth, the thirst, the food,
The scope, and bright ambition, of your souls?
Why else have you, and your renowned forefathers,
From the proud summit of their glittering thrones
Cast down the mightiest of your lawful kings,
That dared the bold infringement? What, but liberty,
Through the famed course of thirteen hundred years,
Aloof hath held invasion from your hills,
And sanctified their shade?—And will ye, will ye
Shrink from the hopes of the expecting world,
Bid your high honours stoop to foreign insult,
And, in one hour, give up to infamy
The harvest of a thousand years of glory?
1*st Dale.* No!
2*d Dale.* Never, never!
3*d Dale.* Perish all first!
4*th Dale.* Die all!
Gust. Yes, die by piecemeal!
Leave not a limb o'er which a Dane may triumph!
Now, from my soul, I joy, I joy, my friends,

To see ye feared; to see that even your foes
Do justice to your valour!—There they be,
The power of kingdoms, summed in yonder host,
Yet kept aloof, yet trembling to assail ye!
And, O! when I look round, and see you here,
Of number short, but prevalent in virtue,
My heart swells high, and burns for the encounter:
True courage but from opposition grows;
And what are fifty, what a thousand slaves,
Matched to the sinew of a single arm,
That strikes for liberty?—That strikes to save
His fields from fire, his infants from the sword,
His couch from lust, his daughters from pollution,
And his large honours from eternal infamy?
What, doubt we then? Shall we, shall we stand here,
Till motives, that might warm an ague's frost,
And nerve the coward's arm, shall poorly serve
To wake us to resistance? Let us on!
O, yes, I read your lovely fierce impatience;
You shall not be withheld; we will rush on them.
This is, indeed, to triumph, where we hold
Three kingdoms in our toil! Is it not glorious,
Thus to appal the bold, meet force with fury,
And push yon torrent back, till every wave
Flee to its fountain?

3d Dale. On! lead us on, Gustavus! one word more
Is but delay of conquest.

Gust. Take your wish.
He, who wants arms, may grapple with the foe,
And so be furnished. You, most noble Anderson,
Divide our powers, and, with the famed Olaus,
Take the left rout.—You, Eric, great in arms!
With the renowned Nederbi, hold the right,
And skirt the forest down; then wheel at once,
Confessed to view, and close upon the vale:
Myself, and my most valiant cousin here,
The invincible Arvida, gallant Sivard,
Arnoldus, and these hundred hardy veterans,
Will pour directly on, and lead the onset.
Joy, joy, I see confessed from every eye!
Your limbs tread vigorous, and your breasts beat high!
Thin though our ranks, though scanty be our bands,
Bold are our hearts, and nervous are our hands!
With us, truth, justice, fame, and freedom close,
Each, singly, equal to an host of foes.
I feel, I feel them fill me out for fight,
They lift my limbs as feathered Hermes light!
Or, like the bird of glory, towering high,
Thunder within his grasp, and lightning in his eye! [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Before the camp.*

Enter CRISTIERN, TROLLIO, *and Attendants.*

Crist. YOUR observation's just; I see it, Trollio:
Men are machines, with all their boasted freedom;
Their movements turn upon some favourite passion;
Let art but find the latent foible out,
We touch the spring, and wind them at our pleasure.

Troll. Let Heaven spy out for virtue, and then starve it!
But vice and frailty are the statesman's quarry,
The objects of our search, and of our science;
Marked by our smiles, and cherished by our bounty.
'Tis hence, you lord it o'er your servile senates;
How low the slaves will stoop to gorge their lusts,
When aptly baited! even the tongues of patriots
(Those sons of clamour) oft relax the nerve
Within the warmth of favour.

Crist. How else should kings subsist? For what is power,
But the nice conduct of another's weakness?
That thing called virtue is the bane of government,
A libel on the state, that asks suppression;
It has a hateful and unbending quality;
It serves no end, still restive to the rein,
And to the spur unspeedy: They who boast it
Are traitors, rivals of their king, my Trollio,
And, wanting other subjects, greatly dare
To lord it o'er themselves. Such is Gustavus,
If yet he be——
And such Arvida was; though now, I trust,
He is too far advanced in our designs
To think of a retreat.

Troll. Impossible!
Already has he leaped the guilty mound,
That might appal his virtue; for the world
He dare not now look back; where shame pursues,
And cuts off all retreat.

Enter Gentleman Usher and PETERSON, *who kneels.*

Gent. My liege, lord Peterson.

Crist. Rise to our trust, most worthy Peterson,
Rise to our friendship: By my head I swear,
Bar but our Trollio here, there's not a Swede,
Who holds thy valued level in our heart!
For thou'rt unshaken, though thy nation swerve;
Faithful among the faithless.

Peter. What I am
Let this inform your majesty. [*Gives a pacquet.*

Troll. A pacquet?
Whence had you that, my friend!

Peter. Even from the hands
Of the once great Gustavus.

Crist. Then you have seen him? Tell me, tell me, Peterson;
What said he? Eh! How looked the mighty rebel?
His means, his scope, the pride of his presumption—
Give me the whole!
Peter. Last night, my gracious lord,
While yet I held your messenger in conference,
Arrived, who brought a letter from Gustavus,
Wherein, digesting many flagrant terms
Of mutinous import against the state
Of your high dignity, by morning light
He prayed me to attend him; boasting much
Of plenteous hopes, and means of boldest enterprize.
Of this I gave you notice; and ere dawn
Set out for fresh intelligence—I came;
I saw him shrunk, that glory of the north,
Soiled with the vileness of a slave's attire;
Where in the depth and darkness of the mines,
For six long months he hath not seen the sun.
Colleagued with circling horrors, hourly toil
Hath been his watch, and penury his earning;
But, like the lion, newly broke from bonds,
The mingling passions from his eyes dart glory;
Pride lifts his stature, and his opening front
Still looks dominion.
Crist. Who were his adherents?
Peter. The traitor Anderson, and a few friends,
To whom, ere I set out, he stood revealed.
And when I seemed to question on his powers
Of rivalship, the props whereon he meant
To lift contention to the princely front
Of such high opposition; he replied,
His powers were near your person.
Crist. How! what's here?
[*Looks on the pacquet.*
To Laurens, Aland, Haquin, and Roderic!
Confusion! Treason's in our camp! Who's there?
Gent. My liege!
Crist. Bear this to Norbi——Bid him seize
[*Gives a signet.*
The Swedish captains.
Troll. Might I but presume——
Crist. I will not be controuled—bid him seize all,
Soldiers and chiefs! by hell, there's not a Swede,
But lurks an instrument to prompt rebellion,
And plots upon my life! Look there, 'tis evident: [*Gives Trollio a letter.*
They are all leagued, confederate with Gustavus,
The abettors of his treason.
Trol. It should seem so:
And yet it should not——Tell me, Peterson,
Art thou assured thy credit with Gustavus
Will answer to a trust like this? Ha! Say.
Peter. Yes, well assured: my zeal appeared too warm
To give the least cold colour for suspicion.
Troll. I fear, my friend, I fear he has o'erreached you.
Divide and conquer, is the sum of politics.
Beyond the dreaded circle of his sword,
Gustavus triumphs in an ample genius;
He walks at large, sees clear and wide around him;
Calm in the storm and turbulence of action;
He ponders on the last event of things,
And makes each cause subservient to the consequence.
Crist. You over-rate his craft; they're false, my Trollio,
False every Swede of them; I read their souls.

Enter CRISTINA *and* MARIANA.

Cristina. I heard it was your royal pleasure, sir,
I should attend your highness.
Crist. Yes, Cristina,
But business interferes. [*Exeunt.*

Enter an Officer.

Offi. My sovereign liege!
Wide o'er the western shelving of yon hill,
We think, though indistinctly, we can spy
Like men in motion mustering on the heath;
And there is one who saith he can discern
A few of martial gesture, and bright arms,
Who this way bend their action.
Crist. Friends, perhaps;
For foes it were too daring—Haste thee, Trollio,
Detach a thousand of our Danish horse
To rule their motions—We will out ourself,
And hold our powers in readiness—Lead on.
Exeunt.

SCENE II.

Enter CRISTINA *and* MARIANA.

Mar. Ha! did you mark, my princess, did you mark?
Should some reverse, some wondrous whirl of fate
Once more return Gustavus to the battle,
New nerve his arm, and wreath his brow with conquest;
Say, would you not repent that e'er you saved
This dreadful man, the foe of your great race;
Who pours impetuous in his country's cause
To spoil you of a kingdom?
Cristina. No, my friend.
Had I to death, or bondage, sold my sire,
Or had Gustavus on our native realms
Made hostile inroad, then, my Mariana!
Had I then saved him from the stroke of justice,
I should not cease my suit to Heaven for pardon.
But if, though in a foe, to reverence virtue,
Withstand oppression, rescue injured innocence,
Step boldly in betwixt my sire and guilt,
And save my king, my father, from dishonour;
If this be sin, I have shook hands with penitence.
First, perish crowns, dominion, all the shine
And transience of this world, ere guilt shall serve
To buy the vain incumbrance.

Mar. Do not think
I meant, my princess, to arraign your virtues,
Howe'er I seemed to question on the consequence.
Cristina. The consequence of virtue must be good:
It must. Though it should prove my father's lot,
In being rescued from one act of guilt,
To lose the whole of all his wide dominions,
He were a gainer—Blasted be that royalty,
Which murder must make sure, and crimes inglorious!
The bulk of kingdoms, nay, the world is light,
When guilt weighs opposite—O would to Heaven,
The loss of empire would restore his innocence,
Restore the fortunes, and the precious lives
Of thousands, fallen the victims of ambition!

Enter LAERTES.

Ha! Laertes! most welcome! well—and have you! say, Laertes——
Laer. O royal maid!
Cristina. Thy looks are doubtful——Speak,
Why art thou silent——Does he live?
Laer. He does.
But death ere night must fill a long account;
The camp, the country's in confusion: War
And changes ride upon the hour, that hastes
To intercept my tongue—I else could tell
Of virtues hitherto beyond my ken;
Courage, to which the lion stoops his crest,
Yet grafted upon qualities as soft
As a rocked infant's meekness; such as tempts,
Against my faith, my country, and allegiance,
To wish thee speed, Gustavus.
Cristina. Then you found him.
Laer. I did: and warned him, but in vain; for death
To him appeared more grateful than to find
His friend's dishonour.
Cristina. Give me the manner—quick—soft, good Laertes!

Enter CRISTIERN, TROLLIO, PETERSON, *Danes, &c.*

Crist. Damned, double traitor! O cursed, false Arvida!
Guard well the Swedish prisoners, bind them hard—
Stand to your arms—Bring forth the captives there!

Enter AUGUSTA *and* GUSTAVA *guarded.*

Troll. My liege——
Crist. Away! I'll hear no more of politics;
Fortune! we will not trust the changeling more;
But wear her girt upon our armed loins,
Or pointed in our grasp.

Enter an Officer.

Offi. The foe's at hand.
With gallant shew your thousand Danes rode forth,
But shall return no more! I marked for action,
A band of desperate resolutes rush on them,
Scarce numbering to a tenth, and in mid way
They closed; the shock was dreadful, nor your Danes
Could bear the madding charge; a while they stood;
Then shrunk, and broke, and turned——When, lo, behind,
Fast wheeling from the right and left, there poured,
Who intercepted their return, and, caught
Within the toil, they perished.
Crist. 'Tis Gustavus!
No mortal else, not Ammon's boasted son,
Not Cæsar would have dared it. Tell me, say,
What numbers in the whole may they amount to?
Offi. About five thousand.
Crist. And no more?
Offi. No more,
That yet appear.
Crist. We count six times their sum.
Haste, soldier, take a trumpet, tell Gustavus
We have of terms to offer, and would treat
Touching his mother's ransom; say, her death,
Suspended by our grace, but waits his answer.
[*Exit Officer.*
Madam, it should well suit with your authority,
[*To Augusta.*
To check this frenzy in your son—look to it,
Or by the saints this hour's your last of life!
Aug. Come, my Gustava, come, my little captive!
We shall be free; our tyrant is grown kind;
And for these chains that bind thy pretty arms,
The golden cherubim shall lend thee wings,
And thou shalt mount amid the smiling choir
Of little heavenly songsters, like thyself,
All robed in innocence.
Gustava. Will you go, mother?
Aug. So help me, mercy! Yes, I'll go, my child;
And I will give thee to thy father's fondness,
And to the arms of all thy royal race
In Heaven; who sit on thrones, with loves, and joys,
And pleasures smiling round.
Crist. Is this my answer?
Come forth, ye ministers of death, come forth!

Enter Ruffians, who seize Augusta and Gustava.

Pluck them asunder! We shall prove you, lady!
'Tis my damned lot, thus ever to be crossed
With rank blown pride, and insolence eternal.
Gustava. O mother, take me, take me from these men!
They fright me with their looks.
Aug. Alas, my child, I cannot take thee from them.
Gustava. O, they will hurt me: can't you take me, mother?

Aug. They can't, they cannot hurt you, my Gustava.
Fear not, my little one! your name should be
A charm o'er cowardice, for you are called
After your valiant brother; he'll disown you,
He will not love you, if you fear, Gustava.
Cristina. Ah! I can hold no longer. Royal sir,
Thus on my knees, and lower, lower still——
Crist. My child! What mean you?
Cristina. O my gracious father!
Kill, kill me rather—let me perish first,
But do not stain the sanctity of kings
With the sweet blood of helpless innocence;
Do not, my father! Spare the little orphans,
And let the lambs go free!
Aug. Ha! who art thou?
That look'st so like the inhabitants of Heaven,
Like mercy sent upon the morning's blush,
To glad the heart, and cheer a gloomy world
With light 'till now unknown?
Crist. Away, they come.
I'll hear no more of your ill-timed petitions.
Cristina. O yet for pity!
Crist. I will none on't; leave me!
Pity! it is the infant fool of nature:
Tear off her hold, and bear her to her tent.
[*Exeunt Cristina, Mar. Laer. and attendants.*

Enter an Officer.

Offi. My liege, Gustavus, though with much reluctance,
Consents to one hour's truce. His soldiers rest
Upon their arms, and, followed by a few,
He comes to know your terms.
Crist. I see, fall back——
Stand firm—Be ready, slaves, and, on the word,
Plunge deep your daggers in their bosoms.
[*Points to Augusta.*

Enter GUSTAVUS, ARVIDA, ANDERSON, ARNOLDUS, SIVARD, *&c.*

Hold!
Gust. Ha! it is, it is my mother!
Crist. Tell me, Gustavus, tell me why is this?
That, as a stream diverted from the banks
Of smooth obedience, thou hast drawn those men
Upon a dry unchannelled enterprize
To turn their inundation?—Are the lives
Of my misguided people held so light,
That thus thou'dst push them on the keen rebuke
Of guarded majesty; where justice waits,
All awful, and resistless to assert
The imperious rights, the sanctitude of kings,
And blast rebellion?
Gust. Justice! Sanctitude!
And rights! O patience! Rights! What rights, thou tyrant?
Yes, if perdition be the rule of power;
If wrongs give right; O then, supreme in mischief!
Thou wert the lord, the monarch of the world!
Too narrow for thy claim. But if thou think'st
That crowns are vilely propertied, like coin,
To be the means, the specialty of lust,
And sensual attribution—If thou think'st,
That empire is of titled birth, or blood;
That nature, in the proud behalf of one,
Shall disenfranchise all her lordly race,
And bow her general issue to the yoke
Of private domination—then, thou proud one,
Here know me for thy king—Howe'er be told,
Not claim hereditary, not the trust
Of frank election;
Not even the high anointing hand of Heaven
Can authorize oppression; give a law
For lawless power; wed faith to violation;
On reason build misrule, or justly bind
Allegiance to injustice—Tyranny
Absolves all faith; and who invades our rights,
Howe'er his own commence, can never be
But an usurper—But for thee, for thee
There is no name!—thou hast abjured mankind;
Dashed safety from thy bleak unsocial side,
And waged wild war with universal nature!
Crist. Licentious traitor! thou canst talk it largely;
Who made thee umpire of the rights of kings,
And power, prime attribute? As on thy tongue
The poise of battle lay, and arms, of force,
To throw defiance in the front of duty.
Look round, unruly boy! thy battle comes
Like raw, disjointed must'ring; feeble wrath!
A war of waters borne against the rock
Of our firm continent, to fume, and chafe,
And shiver in the toil.
Gust. Mistaken man!
I come, empowered and strengthened in thy weakness.
For though the structure of a tyrant's throne
Rise on the necks of half the suffering world,
Fear trembles in the cement: Prayers and tears,
And secret curses, sap its mouldering base,
And steal the pillars of allegiance from it;
Then, let a single arm but dare the sway,
Headlong it turns, and drives upon destruction.
Troll. Profane, and alien to the love of heaven!
Art thou still hardened to the wrath divine,
That hangs o'er thy rebellion?—Know'st thou not
Thou art at enmity with grace? Cast out,
Made an anathema, a curse enrolled
Among the faithful, thou and thy adherents
Shorn from our holy church, and offered up
As sacred to damnation?
Gust. Yes, I know,
When such as thou, with sacrilegious hand,
Seize on the apostolic key of heaven,
It then becomes a tool for crafty knaves
To shut out virtue, and unfold those gates,
That heaven itself had barred against the lusts
Of avarice and ambition. Soft, and sweet,
As looks of charity, or voice of lambs
That bleat upon the morning, are the words
Of christian meekness! Mission all divine!

The law of love sole mandate——but your gall,
Ye Swedish prelacy! Your gall hath turned
The words of sweet, but indigested peace,
To wrath and bitterness——Ye unhallowed men!
In whom vice sanctifies, whose precepts teach
Zeal without truth, religion without virtue,
Who ne'er preach Heaven but with a downward eye,
That turns your souls to dross; who, shouting, loose
The dogs of hell upon us—thefts, and rapes,
Sacked towns, and midnight howlings through the realm
Receive your sanction——O 'tis glorious mischief,
When vice turns holy, puts religion on,
Assumes the robe pontifical, the eye
Of saintly elevation, blesseth sin,
And makes the seal of sweet offended heaven
A sign of blood, a label for decrees,
That hell would shrink to own!———
Crist. No more of this.
Gustavus, wouldst thou yet return to grace,
And hold thy motions in the sphere of duty,
Acceptance might be found.
Gust. Imperial spoiler!
Give me my father, give me back my kindred,
Give me the fathers of ten thousand orphans,
Give me the sons in whom thy ruthless sword
Has left our widows childless! Mine they were,
Both mine, and every Swede's, whose patriot breast
Bleeds in his country's wounds! O thou can'st not!
Thou hast out-sinned all reckoning! Give me then
My all that's left, my gentle mother there,
And spare yon little trembler!
Crist. Yes, on terms
Of compact, and submission.
Gust. Ha! with thee?
Compact with thee! and mean'st thou for my country?
For Sweden! No—so hold my heart but firm,
Altho' it wring for't; though blood drop for tears,
And at the sight my straining eyes start forth—
They both shall perish first.
Crist. Slaves, do your office.
Gust. Hold yet!—Thou can'st not be so damned! my mother!
I dare not ask thy blessing—Where's Arvida?
Where art thou? Come, my friend, thou'st known temptation———
And therefore best can'st pity, or support me,
Arv. Alas! I shall but serve to weigh thee downward,
To pull thee from the dazzling, sightless height,
At which thy virtue soars. For, O Gustavus,
My soul is dark, disconsolate and dark;
Sick to the world, and hateful to myself,
I have no country now; I've nought but thee,
And should yield up the interest of mankind,
Where thine's in question.
Aug. See, my son relents;
Behold, O king! yet spare us but a moment;
His little sister shall embrace his knees,
And these fond arms, around his duteous neck,
Shall join to bend him to us.
Crist. Could I trust ye———
Arv. I'll be your hostage.
Crist. Granted.
Gust. Hold, my friend.
[*Here Arvida breaks from Gustavus, and passes to Cristiern's Party, while Augusta and Gustava go over to Gustavus.*
Aug. Is it then given, yet given me 'ere I die
To see thy face, Gustavus? thus to gaze,
To touch, to fold thee thus!—My son, my son!
And have I lived to this? It is enough.
All armed, and in thy country's precious cause
Terribly beauteous, to behold thee thus!
Why, 'twas my only, hourly suit to heaven,
And now 'tis granted. O my glorious child!
Blessed were the throes I felt for thee, Gustavus!
For from the breast, from out your swathing bands,
You stepped the child of honour.
Gust. O my mother!
Aug. Why stands that water trembling in thy eye?
Why heaves thy bosom? Turn not thus away!
'Tis the last time that we must meet, my child,
And I will have thee whole. Why, why, Gustavus,
Why is this form of heaviness? For me
I trust it is not meant; you cannot think
So poorly of me: I grow old, my son,
And to the utmost period of mortality,
I ne'er should find a death's hour like to this,
Whereby to do thee honour.
Gust. Roman patriots!
Ye Decii, self-devoted to your country!
You gave no mothers up! Will annals yield
No precedent for this, no elder boast,
Whereby to match my trial?
Aug. No, Gustavus;
For Heaven still squares our trial to our strength,
And thine is of the foremost——Noble youth!
Ev'n I, thy parent, with a conscious pride,
Have often bowed to thy superior virtues.
O, there is but one bitterness in death,
One only sting——
Gust. Speak, speak!
Aug. 'Tis felt for thee.
Too well I know thy gentleness of soul,
Melting as babes; even now the pressure's on thee,
And bends thy loveliness to earth—O, child!
The dear but sad foretaste of thy affliction
Already kills thy mother—But, behold,
Behold thy valiant followers, who to thee,
And to the faith of thy protecting arm,
Have given ten thousand mothers, daughters too;

Who in thy virtue yet may learn to bear
Millions of free-born sons to bless thy name,
And pray for their deliverer—O farewell!
This, and but this, the very last adieu!
Heaven sit victorious on thy arm, my son!
And give thee to thy merits!
Crist. Ah, thou traitress!
Gustava. O brother, a'n't you stronger than that man?
Don't let him take my mother.
Aug. See, Gustavus,
My little captive waits for one embrace.
Gust. Come to my arms, thou lamb-like sacrifice!
O that they were of force to hold thee ever,
To let thee to my heart! there lock thee close,
And circle thee with life! But 'twill not be!
Gustava. I'll stay with you, my brother.
Gust. Killing innocence!
That I was born to see this hour!
The pains of hell are on me!—Take her, mother!
Gustava. I will not part with you, indeed, I will not!
Gust. Take her—Distraction! Haste, my dearest mother:
Oh—else I shall run mad—quite mad and save ye.
Arv. Hold, madam; hear me, thou most dear Gustavus!
Thus low I bend my prayer, reject me not:
If once, if ever, thou didst love Arvida,
O leave me here to answer to the wrath
Of this fell tyrant. Save thy honoured mother,
And that sweet lamb, from slaughter!
Gust. Cruel friendship!
Crist. And, by my life I'd take thee at thy word,
Thou doubly damned! but that I know 'twould please thee.
Aug. No, generous prince, thy blood shall never be
The price of our dishonour. Come, my child;
Weep not, sweet babe! there shall no harm come nigh thee.
Crist. 'Tis well, proud dame; you are returned I see——
Each to his charge—Here break we off, Gustavus;
For to the very teeth of thy rebellion
We dash defiance back.
Gust. Alas, my mother!
Grief choaks up utterance, else I have to say
What never tongue unfolded—Yet return!
Come back, and I will give up all to save thee!
For, on the covering of thy sacred head,
My heart drops blood. Thou fountain of my life!
Dearer than mercy is to kneeling penitence,
My earliest blessing, first and latest joy;
Return, return, and save thy lost Gustavus!
Crist. No more, thou trifler!
Aug. O farewell for ever!
[*Exeunt Cristiern and his party. Gustavus and his party remain.*
Gust. Then she is gone—Arvida! Anderson!
For ever gone—Arnoldus, friends, where are ye?
Help here, heave, heave this mountain from me—O——
Heaven keep my senses!——So—We will to battle;
But let no banners wave—Be still, thou trump!
And every martial sound that gives the war
To pomp or levity; for vengeance now
Is clad with heavy arms, sedately stern,
Resolved, but silent as the slaughtered heaps
O'er which my soul is brooding.
Arn. O Gustavus!
Is there a Swede of us, whose sword and soul
Grapples not to thee, as to all they hold
Of earthly estimation? Said I more,
It were but half my thought.
And. On thee we gaze,
As one unknown till this important hour,
Pre-eminent of men!
Siv. Accursed be he,
Who, in thy leading, will not fight, and strive,
And bleed, and gasp, with pleasure!
And. We are thine;
All, all, both we and ours; whom thou this day
Hast dearly purchased.
Arn. Though, to yield us up,
Had scarce been less than virtue.
Gust. O my friends!
I see, 'tis not for man to boast his strength
Before the trial comes—This very hour,
Had I a thousand parents, all seemed light
When weighed against my country; and but now,
One mother seemed of weight to poise the world,
Though conscious truth and reason were against her.
For, O, howe'er the partial passions sway,
High Heaven assigns but one unbiassed way;
Direct through every opposition leads,
Where shelves decline, and many a steep impedes.
Here hold we on—though thwarting fiends alarm,
Here hold we on—though devious Syrens charm;
In Heaven's disposing power events unite,
Nor aught can happen wrong to him who acts aright.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT. V.

SCENE I.—*The royal tent.*

Enter CRISTINA *and* MARIANA.

Cristina. HARK! Mariana, list!—No—All is silent———
It was not fancy sure—didst thou hear aught?
Mar. Too plain, the voice of terror seized my ear,
And my heart sinks within me.
Cristina. O, I fear
The war is now at work—As winds, methought,
Long borne through hollow vaults, the sound approached;
One sound, yet laden with a thousand notes
Of fearful variation; then it swelled
To distant shouts, now coming on the gale;
Again, borne backward with a parting groan,
All sunk to horrid stillness.
Mar. Look, my princess!
Ah, no! withhold thy eyes! the place grows dark,
A sudden cloud of sorrow stains the day,
And throws its gloom around.

Enter four Slaves, as bearing the bodies of AUGUSTA *and* GUSTAVA *on a bier covered.—Four women, in chains, follow weeping.*

Cristina. Whence are ye, say, you daughters of affliction?
Their speech is in their tears—Avert, ye saints!
Avert that thought! soft! hold ye! I've a tear
For every mourner—Ah!
[*Looks under the covering.*
Mar. What mean you, madam?
Cristina. Reflection, come not there! See it not, eyes!
How art thou spilt, thou blood of royalty!
Close at the paleness of its parent breast
The babe lies slaughtered. Tell me, who did this?
No, hold ye! Say not that my father did it;
For duty then turns rebel—Cruel father!
O, that some villager, whose early toil
Lifts the penurious morsel to his mouth,
Had claimed my birth! Ambition had not then
Thus stepped 'twixt me and Heaven.
Mar. Go, bear it hence———
Turn, turn, my royal mistress!
Cristina. Ah, Augusta!
Among thy foes thou'rt fallen, thou'rt fallen in virtue!
Exalt thyself, O Guilt! for here the good
Have none who may lament them. Sit we down;
For I grow weary of the world; let death
Within his vaulted durance, dark and still,
Receive me too; and where the afflicted rest,
There fold me in for ever.

Enter LAERTES.

Laer. Arise, Cristina; fly! thou royal virgin!
This morn beheld thee mistress of the north,
Bright heir of Scandinavia; and this hour
Has left thee not, throughout thy wide dominions,
Whereon to rest thy foot.
Cristina. Now, praise to Heaven!
Say but my father lives!
Laer. At your command
I went; and, from a neighbouring summit, viewed
Where either host stood adverse, sternly wedged;
Reflecting on each other's gloomy front,
Fell hate and fixed defiance—When, at once,
The foe moved on, attendant on the steps
Of their Gustavus—He, with mournful pace
Came slow and silent; till two hapless Danes
Pricked forth, and on his helm discharged their fury:
Then rouzed the lion! To my wondering sight
His stature grew twofold; before his eye
All force seemed withered, and his horrid plume
Shook wild dismay around; as Heaven's dread bolt,
He shot, he pierced our legions; in his strength
His shouting squadron gloried, rushing on
Where'er he led the battle—full five times,
Hemmed by our mightier host, the foe seemed lost,
And swallowed from my sight; five times again,
Like flame, they issued to the light—and thrice,
These eyes beheld him, they beheld Gustavus
Unhorsed, and by a host girt singly in;
And thrice he broke through all.
Cristina. My blood runs chill.
Laer. With such a strenuous, such a laboured conflict,
Sure never field was fought! until Gustavus
Aloud cried, Victory! and on his spear
High reared the imperial diadem of Denmark.
Then slacked the battle; then recoiled our host;
His echoed, Victory! and now would know
No bounds; rout followed, and the face of fight——
——She heeds me not.
Cristina. O, ill-starred royalty!
My father! Cruel, dear, unhappy father!
Summoned so sudden! fearful thought!
Step in, sweet mercy! For thy time was—Ha!

Enter CRISTIERN, *flying, without his helmet, in disorder, his sword broke, and his garments bloody; he throws away his sword, and speaks.*

Crist. Give us new arms of proof—fresh horses ——quick!
A watch without there—set a standard up
To guide our scattered powers! Haste, my friends, haste!
We must be gone—O for some cooling stream
To slake a monarch's thirst!
Laer. A post, my liege,
A second post from Denmark says——

Crist. All's lost.
Is it not so? Begone! Perdition choak thee—
Give me a moment's solitude—Thought, thought,
Where wouldst thou lead?
Cristina. He sees me not——Alas, alas, my father!
O, what a war there lives within his eye!
Where greatness struggles to survive itself.
I tremble to approach him; yet I fain
Would bring peace to him—Don't you know me, sir?
My father, look upon me! look, my father!
Why strains your lip, and why that doubtful eye
Through fury melting o'er me? Turn, ah, turn!
I cannot bear its softness—How? nay, then,
There is a falling dagger in that tear,
To kill thy child, to murder thy Cristina.
Crist. Then thou'rt Cristina?
Cristina. Yes.
Crist. My child!
Cristina. I am.
Crist. Curse me! then curse me! Join with heaven and earth
And hell, to curse!
Cristina. Alas! on me, my father,
Thy curses be on me; but on thy head
Fall blessings from that heaven, which has this day
Preserved thy life in battle.
Crist. What have I
To do with heaven? Damnation! What am I?
All frail and transient as my lapsed dominions!
E'en now the solid earth prepares to slide
From underneath me. Nature's power cries out,
Leave him, thou universe! No—hold me, heaven!
Hold me, thou heaven! whom I've forsaken—hold
Thy creature, though accursed!
Cristina. Patience and peace
Possess thy mind! Not all thy pride of empire
E'er gave such blessed sensation, as one hour
Of penitence, though painful——Let us hence—
Far from the blood and bustle of ambition.
Be it my task to watch thy rising wish,
To smooth thy brow, find comfort for thy cares,
And for thy will, obedience; still to cheer
The day with smiles, and lay the nightly down
Beneath thy slumbers.
Crist. O thou all that's left me!
Even in the riot, in the rage of fight,
Thy guardian virtues watched around my head,
When else no arm could aid—for through my ranks,
My circling troops, the fell Gustavus rushed;
'Vengeance!' he cried, and with one eager hand
Gripped fast my diadem—his other arm
High reared the deathful steel—suspended yet;
For in his eye, and through his varying face,
Conflicting passions fought——he looked——he stood
In wrath reluctant—Then, with gentler voice;
'Cristina, thou hast conquered! Go,' he cried,
'I yield thee to her virtues.'

Enter TROLLIO *and Guards, swords drawn.*

Troll. Haste, O king!
The foe has hemmed us round; O haste to save
Thyself and us!
Crist. Thy sword.
[*Takes a sword from one of the Guards.*
Troll. What means my——
Crist. Villain!
Well thought, by Hell! Ha! Yes, thou art our minister,
The reverend monitor of vice——the soil,
Baneful and rank with every principle,
Whence grow the crimes of kings. First perish thou! [*Stabs him.*
Who taught the throne of power to fix on fear,
And raise its safety from the public ruin;
Fall thou into the gulph thyself hast fixed
Between the prince and people; cutting off
Communion from the ear of royalty,
And mercy from complaint—away, away!
Thy death, old man, be on thy monarch's head;
On thine, the blood of all thy countrymen,
Who fell beneath thy counsels. [*Exeunt.*

TROLLIO *attempts to rise, and then speaks.*

Troll. Thou bloody tyrant! late, too late I find,
Nor faith, nor gratitude, nor friendly trust,
No force of obligations can subsist
Between the guilty—O, let none aspire
To be a king's convenience! Has he virtues,
Those are his own; his vices are his minister's.
Who dares to step 'twixt envy and the throne,
Alike to feel the caprice of his prince,
As public detestation. Ha! I am going—
But whither? No one near! to feel! to catch!
The world but for an instant! for one ray
To guide my soul! Her way grows wonderous dark,
And down! down! down! [*Dies.*

SCENE II.

Enter GUSTAVUS, ANDERSON, ARNOLDUS, SIVARD, *&c. in triumph.* GUSTAVUS *advances, and the rest range themselves on each side of the stage.*

Gust. That we have conquered, first we bend to heaven!
And. And next to thee!
All. To thee, to thee, Gustavus!
Gust. No, matchless men! my brothers of the war!
Be it my greatest glory to have mixed
My arms with yours, and to have fought for once
Like to a Dalecarlian; like to you,
The sires of honour, of a new-born fame,
To be transmitted, from your great memorial,
To climes unknown, to age succeeding age,
Till time shall verge upon eternity,
And patriots be no more——

Arn. Behold, my lord,
The Danish prisoners, and the traitor Peterson,
Attend their fate.

Gust. Send home the Danes with honour,
And let them better learn, from our example,
To treat whom next they conquer with humanity.

And. But then for Peterson!

Gust. His crimes are great:
A single death were a reward for treason:
Let him still languish—Let him be exiled!
No more to see the land of liberty,
The hills of Sweden, nor the native fields
Of known, endeared idea.

And. Royal sir,
This is to pardon, to encourage villains;
And hourly to expose that sacred life,
Where all our safety centres.

Gust. Fear them not.
The fence of virtue is a chief's best caution;
And the firm surety of my people's hearts
Is all the guard that e'er shall wait Gustavus.
I am a soldier from my youth; yet Anderson,
These wars, where man must wound himself in man,
Have somewhat shocking in them: trust me, friend,
Except in such a cause as this day's quarrel,
I would not shed a single wretch's blood
For the world's empire!

Arn. O exalted Sweden!
Blessed people! Heaven! wherein have we deserved
A man like this to rule us!

Enter ARVIDA *leading in* CRISTINA. *He runs to* GUSTAVUS.

Gust. My Arvida!

Arv. My king! O hail! Thus let me pay my homage. [*Kneels.*

Gust. Rise, rise, nor shame our friendship.

Arv. See, Gustavus! Behold, nor longer wonder at my frailty.

Gust. Be faithful, eyes! Ha! Yes! it must be so.
'Tis she; for Heaven would choose no other form
Wherein to treasure every mental virtue!

Cristina. Renowned Gustavus! mightiest among men!
If such a wretch, the captive of thy arms,
Trembling and awed in thy superior presence,
May find the grace that every other finds,
For thou art said to be of wondrous goodness!
Then hear, and O excuse a foe's presumption,
While low, thus low, you see a suppliant child,
Now pleading for a father, for a dear,
Much loved—if cruel, yet unhappy—father!
O, let, let him escape, who ne'er can wrong thee more!
If he, with circling nations, could not stand
Against thee single; singly, what can he,
When thou art fenced with nations?

Gust. Ha! that posture!
O rise—surprised, my eye perceived it not.
Cristina! thou all formed for excellence!
I've much to say, but that my tongue, my thoughts,
Are troubled; warred on by unusual passions.
'Twas hence thou hadst it in thy power to ask,
Ere I could offer.——Come, my friend, assist,
Instruct me to be grateful. O Cristina!
I fought for freedom, not for crowns, thou fair one!
They shall sit brighter on that beauteous head,
Whose eye might awe the monarchs of the earth,
And light the world to virtue!——My Arvida!

Arv. O great and good, and glorious to the last!
I read thy soul, I see the generous conflict,
And come to fix, not trouble, thy repose.
Could you but know with what an eager haste
I sprung to execute thy late commands;
To shield this lovely object of thy cares,
And give her thus, all beauteous, to thy eyes!
For I've no bliss but thine, have lost the form
Of every wish that's foreign to thy happiness.
But, O, my king! my conqueror! my Gustavus!
It grieves me much, that thou must shortly mourn,
Even on the day in which thy country's freed,
That crowns thy arms with conquest and Cristina.

Gust. Alas! your cheek is pale——you bleed, my brother!

Arv. I do, indeed—to death!

Gust. You have undone me:
Rash, headstrong man! O, was this well, Arvida? [*Turns from him.*

Arv. Pardon, Gustavus! mine's the common lot,
The fate of thousands fallen this day in battle.
I had resolved on life, to see you blessed,
To see my king and his Cristina happy.
Turn, thou beloved, thou honoured next to Heaven!
And to thy arms receive a penitent,
Who never more shall wrong thee.

Gust. O, Arvida!
Friend! friend! [*Turns and embraces him.*

Arv. Thy heart beats comfort to me! in this breast,
Let thy Arvida, let thy friend survive.
O! strip his once loved image of its frailties,
And strip it, too, of every fonder thought,
That may give thee affliction——Do, Gustavus;
It is my last request; for Heaven and thou
Are all the care, and business—of Arvida.
[*Dies.*

Gust. Friend! brother! speak——He's gone, and here is all
That's left of him, who was my life's best treasure!
How art thou fallen, thou greatly valiant man!
In ruin graceful, like the warrior spear,
Though shivered in the dust!—So fall Gustavus!
But thou art sped, hast reached the goal before me;

And one light lapse, throughout thy course of virtue,
Shews only thou wert man, ordained to strive,
But not attain, perfection.——
Dost thou, too, weep? transcendent, loveliest maid!
Pardon a heart, o'ercharged with grief,
That in thy presence will not be exiled,
Though every joy dwells round thee.
Cristina. O Gustavus!
A bosom, pure like thine, must soon regain
The heart-felt happiness that dwells with virtue;
And Heaven, on all exterior circumstance,
Shall pour the balm of peace, shall pay thee back
The bliss of nations, breathing on thy head
The sweets that live within the prayers of foes,
Subdued unto thy merits.——Fare, farewell!
Gust. Thou shalt not part, Cristina.
Cristina. O!—I must——
Gust. No, thou art all that's left to sweeten life,
And reconcile the wearied to the world.
Cristina. It will not be—I dare not hear——
Gust. You must.
I am thy suppliant in my turn—but, O!
My suit is more, much more, than life or empire,
Than man can merit, or worlds give without thee!
Cristina. Now, aid me, aid me, all ye chaster powers,
That guard a woman's weakness! 'Tis resolved;
Thy own example charms thy suit to silence.
Nor think alone to bear the palm of virtue,
Thou, who hast taught the world, when duty calls,
To throw the bar of every wish behind them.
Exalted in that thought, like thee I rise,
While every lessening passion sinks beneath me.
Adieu, adieu, most honoured, first of men!
I go, I part, I fly, but to deserve thee.
Gust. Yet stay—a moment—till my fluttering heart
Pour forth in love, in wonder pour before thee,
Thou cruel excellence—Wouldst thou, too, leave me?
Not if the heart, the arms, of thy Gustavus
Have force to hold thee!
Cristina. O delightful notes!
That I do love thee, yes, 'tis true, my lord;
The bond of virtue, friendship's sacred tie,
The lover's pains, and all the sister's fondness—
Mine has the flame of every love within it.
But I have a father, guilty if he be,
Yet is he old; if cruel, yet a father.
Abandoned now by every supple wretch,
That fed his years with flattery—I am all
That's left to calm, to soothe his troubled soul
To penitence, to virtue; and, perhaps,
Restore the better empire o'er his mind,
True seat of all dominion. Yet, Gustavus,
Yet there are mightier reasons—O, farewell!
Had I ne'er loved, I might have stayed with honour. [*Exit.*

GUSTAVUS *looks after* CRISTINA, *then turns and looks on* ARVIDA.—ANDERSON, ARNOLDUS, *&c. advance.*

And. Behold, my lord, behold the sons of war,
Of triumph, turn to tears; while, from that eye,
All Sweden takes her fate—and smiles around,
Or weeps, with her Gustavus!
Arn. Wilt thou not cheer them? say, thou great deliverer!
Siv. O general!
1*st Dale.* King!
2*d Dale.* Brother!
3*d Dale.* Father!
All. Friend!
Gust. Come, come, my brothers all! Yes, I will strive
To be the sum of every title to ye,
And you shall be my sire, my friend revived,
My sister, mother, all that's kind and dear,
For so Gustavus holds ye——O, I will
Of private passions all my soul divest,
And take my dearer country to my breast;
To public good transfer each fond desire,
And clasp my Sweden with a lover's fire.
Well pleased, the weight of all her burdens bear;
Dispense all pleasure, but engross all care.
Still quick to find, to feel my people's woes,
And wake, that millions may enjoy repose.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

MAHOMET,

THE

IMPOSTOR.

BY

MILLER.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

MAHOMET.
MIRVAN, *his general.*
ALI,
HERCIDES, } *officers to Mahomet.*
AMMON,
ZAPHNA, *a captive, brought up under Mahomet.*

MEN.

ALCANOR, *chief of the senate of Mecca.*
PHARON, *his friend.*

WOMEN.

PALMIRA, *a captive, brought up under Mahomet.*

Scene,—Mecca.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*an apartment in the temple of Mecca.*

Enter ALCANOR *and* PHARON.

Alc. PHARON, no more—shall I
Fall prostrate to an arrogant impostor,
Homage in Mecca one I banished thence,
And incense the delusions of a rebel!
No—blast Alcanor, righteous Heaven! if e'er
This hand, yet free and uncontaminate,
Shall league with fraud, or adulate a tyrant.
Pha. August and sacred chief of Ishmael's senate,
This zeal of thine, paternal as it is,
Is fatal now—our impotent resistance
Controls not Mahomet's unbounded progress,
But, without weakening, irritates the tyrant.
When once a citizen you well condemned him
As an obscure, seditious innovator;
But now he is a conqueror, prince, and pontiff,
Whilst nations numberless embrace his laws,
And pay him adoration—even in Mecca
He boasts his proselytes.
Alc. Such proselytes
Are worthy of him—low untutored reptiles,
In whom sense only lives—most credulous still
Of what is most incredible.
Pha. Be such
Disdained, my lord; but may not the pest spread upwards,
And seize the head—Say, is the senate sound?
I fear some members of that reverend class
Are marked with the contagion, who, from views
Of higher power and rank,
Worship this rising sun, and give a sanction
To his invasions.

Alc. If, ye Powers divine!
Ye mark the movements of this nether world,
And bring them to account, crush, crush those vipers,
Who, singled out by a community
To guard their rights, shall, for a grasp of ore,
Or paltry office, sell them to the foe!
Pha. Each honest citizen, I grant, is thine,
And, grateful for thy boundless blessings on them,
Would serve thee with their lives; but the approach
Of this usurper to their very walls
Strikes them with such a dread, that even these
Implore thee to accept his proffered peace.
Alc. Oh, people lost to wisdom as to glory!
Go, bring in pomp, and serve upon your knees
This idol, that will crush you with its weight.
Mark, I abjure him: by his savage hand
My wife and children perished, whilst in vengeance
I carried carnage to his very tent,
Transfixed to earth his only son, and wore
His trappings as a trophy of my conquest.
This torch of enmity, thus lighted 'twixt us,
The hand of time itself can ne'er extinguish.
Pha. Extinguish not, but smother for a while
Its fatal flame, and greatly sacrifice
Thy private sufferings to the public welfare.
Oh say, Alcanor, wert thou to behold
(As soon thou may'st) this famed metropolis
With foes begirt, behold its pining tenants
Prey on each other for the means of life,
Whilst lakes of blood and mountains of the slain
Putrify the air,
And sweep off thousands with their poisonous steams,
Would thy slain children be avenged by this?
Alc. No, Pharon, no; I live not for myself:
My wife and children lost, my country's now
My family.
Pha. Then let not that be lost.
Alc. 'Tis lost by cowardice.
Pha. By rashness often.
Alc. Pharon, desist.
Pha. My noble lord, I cannot,
Must not, desist, will not, since you're possessed
Of means to bring this insolent invader
To any terms you'll claim.
Alc. What means?
Pha. Palmira.
That blooming fair, the flower of all his camp,
By thee borne off in our last skirmish with him,
Seems the divine ambassadress of peace,
Sent to procure our safety. Mahomet
Has by his heralds thrice proposed her ransom,
And bade us fix the price.
Alc. I know it, Pharon:
And wouldst thou then restore this noble treasure
To that barbarian? Wouldst thou, for the frauds,
The deaths, the devastations, he brings on us,
Enrich his ruffian hands with such a gem,
And render beauty the reward of rapine?—
Nay, smile not, friend, nor think that at these years,
Well travelled in the winter of my days,
I entertain a thought towards this young beauty,
But what's as pure as is the western gale,
That breathes upon the uncropt violet——
Pha. My lord——
Alc. This heart, by age and grief congealed,
Is no more sensible to love's endearments
Than are our barren rocks to morn's sweet dew,
That balmy trickles down their rugged cheeks.
Pha. My noble chief, each master-piece of nature
Commands involuntary homage from us.
Alc. I own, a tenderness unfelt before,
A sympathetic grief, with ardent wishes
To make her happy, fill my widowed bosom:
I dread her being in that monster's power,
And burn to have her hate him like myself.
'Twas on this hour I, at her modest suit,
Promised her audience in my own pavilion.
Pharon, go thou, meanwhile, and see the senate
Assembled straight—I'll sound them as I ought.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE II.—*changes to a room of state.*

Enter PALMIRA.

Pal. What means this boding terror, that usurps,
In spite of me, dominion o'er my heart,
Converting the sweet flower of new-blown hope
To deadly nightshade, poisoning to my soul
The fountain of its bliss?—Oh holy prophet!
Shall I ne'er more attend thy sacred lessons?
Oh Zaphna! much-loved youth! I feel for thee
As for myself—But hold! my final audit
Is now at hand—I tremble for the event!
Here comes my judge—now liberty or bondage!

Enter ALCANOR.

Alc. Palmira, whence those tears? trust me, fair maid!
Thou art not fallen into barbarians' hands;
What Mecca can afford of pomp or pleasure,
To call attention from misfortune's lap,
Demand and share it.
Pal. No, my generous victor!
My suit's for nothing Mecca can afford;
Prisoner these two long months beneath your roof,
I have tasted such benignity and candour,
Whilst your own hands so laboured to beguile
The anxious moments of captivity,
That oft I have called my tears ingratitude.
Alc. If ought remains, that's in my power, to smooth
The rigour of your fate, and crown your wishes,
Why, 'twould fill
The furrows in my cheeks, and make old age
Put on its summer's garb.
Pal. Thus low I bless thee. [*Kneeling.*
It is on you, on you alone, Alcanor,
My whole of future happiness depends:

Have pity then;
Pity, Alcanor, one, who is torn from all
That's dear or venerable to her soul;
Restore me, then, restore me to my country,
Restore me to my father, prince, and prophet!
Alc. Is slavery dear then? is fraud venerable?
What country? a tumultuous wandering camp!
Pal. My country, sir, is not a single spot
Of such a mould, or fixed to such a clime;
No, 'tis the social circle of my friends,
The loved community, in which I'm linked,
And in whose welfare all my wishes centre.
Alc. Excellent maid! Then Mecca be thy country.
Robbed of my children, would Palmira deign
To let me call her child, the toil I took
To make her destiny propitious to her,
Would lighten the rough burthen of my own:
But no; you scorn my country and my laws.
Pal. Can I be your's, when not my own? Your bounties
Claim and share my gratitude—but Mahomet
Claims right o'er me of parent, prince, and prophet.
Alc. Of parent, prince, and prophet! Heav'ns! that robber,
Who, a scaped felon, emulates a throne,
And, scoffer at all faiths, proclaims a new one!
Pal. Oh, cease, my lord! this blasphemous abuse
Of one, whom millions with myself adore,
Does violence to my ear; such black profaneness
'Gainst Heaven's interpreter blots out remembrance
Of favours past, and nought succeeds but horror.
Alc. Oh superstition! thy pernicious rigours,
Inflexible to reason, truth, and nature,
Banish humanity the gentlest breasts.
Palmira, I lament to see thee plunged
So deep in error—
Pal. Do you then reject
My just petition? can Alcanor's goodness
Be deaf to suffering virtue?
Name but the ransom,
And Mahomet will treble what you ask.
Alc. There is no ransom Mahomet can offer,
Proportioned to the prize. Trust me, Palmira,
I cannot yield thee up. What! to a tyrant,
Who wrongs thy youth, and mocks thy tender heart
With vile illusions and fanatic terrors!—

Enter PHARON.

What wouldst thou, Pharon?
Pha. From yon western gate,
Which opens on Moradia's fertile plains,
Mahomet's general, Mirvan, hastes to greet thee.
Alc. Mirvan, that vile apostate!
Pha. In one hand
He holds a scimitar, the other bears
An olive branch, which to our chiefs he waves,
An emblem of his suit—a martial youth,
Zaphna by name, attends him for our hostage.
Pal. apart.] Zaphna! mysterious heaven!
Pha. Mirvan advances
This way, my lord, to render you his charge.
Alc. Mirvan advance! how dare the traitor see me?
Palmira, thou retire—Pharon, be present.
[*Exit. Pal.*

Enter MIRVAN.

After six years of infamous rebellion
Against thy native country, dost thou, Mirvan,
Again profane with thy detested presence
These sacred walls, which once thy hands defended,
But thy bad heart has vilely since betrayed?
Thou poor deserter of thy country's gods,
Thou base invader of thy country's rights,
What wouldst thou have with me?
Mir. I pardon thee——
Out of compassion to thy age and sufferings,
And high regard for thy experienced valour,
Heaven's great apostle offers thee in friendship
A hand could crush thee, and I come commissioned
To name the terms of peace he deigns to tender.
Alc. He deigns to tender! insolent impostor!
Dost thou not, Mirvan, blush
To serve this wretch—this base of soul as birth?
Mir. Mahomet's grandeur's in himself; he shines not
With borrowed lustre.
Plunged in the night of prejudice, and bound
In fetters of hereditary faith,
My judgment slept; but when I found him born
To mould anew the prostrate universe,
I started from my dream, joined his career,
And shar'd his arduous and immortal labours.
Once, I must own, I was as blind as thou:
Then wake to glory, and be changed like me.
Alc. What death to honour, wakening to such glory!
Pha. Oh, what a fall from virtue was that change!
Mir. Come, embrace our faith, reign with Mahomet,
And, clothed in terrors, make the vulgar tremble.
Alc. 'Tis Mahomet, and tyrants like to Mahomet,
'Tis Mirvan, and apostates like to Mirvan,
I only would make tremble—Is it, say'st thou,
Religion, that's the parent of this rapine,
This virulence and rage?—No; true religion
Is always mild, propitious and humane,
Plays not the tyrant, plants no faith in blood,
Nor bears destruction on her chariot-wheels;
But stoops to polish, succour, and redress,
And builds her grandeur on the public good.
Mir. Thou art turned Christian, sure! some straggling monk
Has taught thee these tame lessons—

Alc. If the Christians
Hold principles like these, which reason dictates,
Which all our notions of the powers divine
Declare the social laws they meant for man,
And all the beauties and delights of nature
Bear witness to, the Christians may be right;
Thy sect cannot, who, nursed in blood and slaughter,
Worship a cruel and revengeful being,
And draw him always with his thunder round him,
As ripe for the destruction of mankind.
Mir. If clemency delights thee, learn it here.
Though banished, by thy voice, his native city,
Though, by thy hand, robbed of his only son,
Mahomet pardons thee; nay, farther, begs
The hatred burning 'twixt you be extinguished,
With reconciliation's generous tear.
Alc. I know thy master's arts; his generous tears,
Like the refreshing drops, that previous fall
To the wild outrage of o'erwhelming earthquakes,
Only forerun destruction;
Courage he has, not bravery;
For blood and havock are the sure attendants
On his victorious car.
Pha. Leagues he will make too——
Alc. Like other grasping tyrants, till he eyes
A lucky juncture to enlarge his bounds;
Then he'll deride them, leap o'er every tie
Of sacred guarantee, or sworn protection;
And when the oppressed ally implores assistance,
Beneath that mask invade the wished-for realms,
And from pure friendship take them to himself.
Mir. Mahomet fights Heaven's battles, bends the bow,
To spread Heaven's laws, and to subject to faith
The iron neck of error.
Alc. Lust and ambition, Mirvan, are the springs
Of all his actions; whilst, without one virtue,
Dissimulation, like a flattering painter,
Bedecks him with the colouring of them all:
This is thy master's portrait—But no more——
My soul's inexorable, and my hate
Immortal as the cause from whence it sprang.
Mir. What cause——
Alc. The difference between good and evil.
Mir. Thou talkest to me, Alcanor, with an air
Of a stern judge, that, from his dread tribunal,
Intimidates the criminal beneath him:
Resume thy temper, act the minister,
And treat with me as with the ambassador
Of Heaven's apostle and Arabia's king.
Alc. Arabia's king! what king? who crowned him?
Mir. Conquest——
Whilst, to the style of conqueror, and of monarch,
Patron of peace he'd add—Name then the price
Of peace and of Palmira—Boundless treasures,
The spoils of vanquished monarchs, and the stores
Of rifled provinces, are thrown before thee.
Our troops, with matchless ardour, hasten hither
To lay in ruin this rebellious city;
Stem then the rushing torrent: Mahomet
In person comes to claim a conference with thee,
For this good purpose.
Alc. Who? Mahomet?
Mir. Yes, he conjures thou'lt grant it.
Alc. Traitor! were I sole ruler here in Mecca,
I'd answer thee with chastisement——
Mir. Hot man!
I pity thy false virtue—But farewell——
And, since the senate share thy power in Mecca,
To their serener wisdoms I'll appeal.
[*Exit Mirvan.*
Alc. I'll meet thee there, and see whose voice is victor.
Come, Pharon, aid me to repulse this traitor;
To bear him with impunity amongst us
Is treason 'gainst ourselves——Ye sacred powers,
My country's gods, that, for three thousand years,
Have reigned protectors of the tribe of Ishmael,
Oh! support my spirit
In that firm purpose it has always held!
To combat violence, fraud, and usurpation,
To pluck the spoil from the oppressors' jaws,
And keep my country, as I found it, free!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—PALMIRA'S *apartment.*

Enter PALMIRA.

Pal. CEASE, cease, ye streaming instruments of woe,
From your ignoble toil—Take warmth, my heart!
Collect thy scattered powers, and brave misfortune.
In vain the storm-tossed mariner repines;
Were he within to raise as great a tempest
As beats him from without, it would not smooth
One boisterous surge: impatience only throws
Discredit on mischance, and adds a shame
To our affliction.

Enter ZAPHNA.

Ha! all-gracious Heaven!
Thou, Zaphna! is it thou? what pitying angel
Guided thy steps to these abodes of bondage?
Zaph. Thou sovereign of my soul, and all its powers,
Object of every fear, and every wish,
Friend, sister, love, companion, all that's dear!
Do I once more behold thee, my Palmira?
Oh, I will set it down the whitest hour,
That Zaphna e'er was blessed with!
Pal. Say, my hero——
Are my ills ended then? They are, they are.

Now Zaphna's here I am no more a captive,
Except to him: oh, blest captivity!
Zaph. Those smiles are dearer to my raptured breast,
Sweeter those accents to my listening heart,
Than all Arabia's spices to the sense.
Pal. No wonder, that my soul was so elate,
No wonder, that the cloud of grief gave way,
When thou, my sun of comfort, wert so nigh,
Zaph. Since that dire hour, when on Sabaria's strand
The barbarous foe deprived me of Palmira,
In what a gulph of horror and despair
Have thy imagined perils plunged my soul!
Stretched on expiring corses for a while
To the deaf stream I poured out my complaint,
And begged I might be numbered with the dead,
That strewed its banks——then starting from despair,
With rage I flew to Mahomet for vengeance;
He, for some high mysterious purpose, known
To heaven and him alone, at length dispatched
The valiant Mirvan to demand a truce:
Instant on wings of lightning I pursued him,
And entered as his hostage—fixed, Palmira,
Or to redeem, or die a captive with thee.
Pal. Heroic youth!
Zaph. But how have these barbarians
Treated my fair?
Pal. With high humanity.
I, in my victor, found a friend—Alcanor
Has made me feel captivity in nothing
But absence from my Zaphna and my friends.—
Zaph. I grieve a soul so generous is our foe:
But now, presented as an hostage to him,
His noble bearing and humanity
Made captive of my heart; I felt, methought,
A new affection lighted in my breast,
And wondered, whence the infant ardour sprang.
Pal. Yet generous as he is, not all my prayers,
Not all the tears I lavish at his feet,
Can move him to restore me——
Zaph. But he shall——
Let the barbarian know he shall, Palmira;
The god of Mahomet, our divine protector,
Whose still triumphant standard I have borne
O'er piles of vanquished infidels—that power,
Which brought unnumbered battlements to earth,
Will humble Mecca too.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, noble Mirvan,
Do my Palmira's chains sit loose upon her?
Say, is it freedom? This presumptuous senate—
Mir. Has granted all we asked, all we could wish—
The truce obtained, the gates to Mahomet
Flew open——
Zaph. Mahomet in Mecca say'st thou?
Once more in Mecca!
Pal. Transport! bid him welcome.
Zaph. Thy sufferings then are o'er, the ebb is past,
And a full tide of hope flows in upon us!
Mir. The spirit of our prophet, that inspired me,
Breathed such divine persuasion from my lips,
As shook the reverend fathers—'Sirs,' cried I,
'This favourite of high Heaven, who rules in battle,
'Before whose footstool tributary kings
'Bow the anointed head, born here in Mecca,
'Asks but to be enrolled a senator,
'And you refuse his prayer. Deluded sages!
'Although your conqueror, he requests no more
'Than one day's truce, pure pity to yourselves!
'To save you if he can; and you—Oh shame!'—
At this a general murmur spread around,
Which seemed propitious to us——
Zaph. Greatly carried!
Go on——
Mir. Then straight the inflexible Alcanor
Flew through the streets, assembling all the people
To bar our prophet. Thither too I fled,
Urged the same arguments, exhorted, threatened,
Till they unhinged the gates, and gave free passage
To Mahomet and his chiefs—In vain Alcanor,
And his disheartened party, strove to oppose him;
Serene and dauntless, through the gazing crowd,
With more than human majesty he moved,
Bearing the peaceful olive, whilst the truce
Was instantly proclaimed——
Pal. But where's the prophet?
Mir. Reclined in yonder grot, that joins the temple,
Attended by his chiefs.
Zaph. There let us haste
With duteous step, and bow ourselves before him. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to a spacious grotto.*

MAHOMET *discovered, with the alcoran before him.*

Mah. Glorious hypocrisy! What fools are they,
Who, fraught with lustful or ambitious views,
Wear not thy spacious mask—Thou, Alcoran!
Hast won more battles, ta'en more cities for me,
Than thrice my feeble numbers had atchieved,
Without the succour of thy sacred impulse.

Enter HERCIDES, AMMON, *and* ALI.

Invincible supporters of our grandeur!
My faithful chiefs, Hercides, Ammon, Ali!
Go, and instruct this people in my name,
That faith may dawn, and, like a morning star,
Be herald to my rising:
Lead them to know and to adore my god;
But above all, to fear him—Lo, Palmira! [*Exeunt Hercides, &c.*
Her angel-face, with unfeigned blushes spread,
Proclaims the purity, that dwells within.

Enter MIRVAN, ZAPHNA, *and* PALMIRA.

[*To Palmira.*] The hand of war was ne'er before so barbarous,
Never bore from me half so rich a spoil
As thee, my fair.
Pal. Joy to my heavenly guardian!
Joy to the world, that Mahomet's in Mecca!
Mah. My child, let me embrace thee—How's this, Zaphna!
Thou here!
Zaph. [*kneeling.*] My father, chief, and holy pontiff!
The god, that thou'rt inspired by, marched before me.
Ready for thee to wade through seas of danger,
Or cope with death itself, I hither hastened
To yield myself an hostage, and with zeal
Prevent thy order.
Mah. 'Twas not well, rash boy:
He, that does more than I command him, errs
As much as he, who falters in his duty,
And is not for my purpose—I obey
My god—implicitly obey thou me.
Pal. Pardon, my gracious lord, his well-meant ardour.
Brought up from tender infancy beneath
The shelter of thy sacred patronage,
Zaphna and I've been animated still
By the same sentiments: Alas, great prophet!
I have had enough of wretchedness—to languish
A prisoner here, far both from him and you;
Grudge me not then the ray of consolation
His presence beamed, nor cloud my dawning hope
Of rising freedom and felicity.
Mah. Palmira, 'tis enough; I read thy heart;
Be not alarmed; though burdened with the cares
Of thrones and altars, still my guardian eye
Will watch o'er thee as o'er the universe.
Follow my generals, Zaphna. Fair Palmira,
Retire, and pay your powerful vows to Heaven,
And dread no wrongs but from Alcanor.
[*Zaphna and Palmira go out separately.*
Mirvan——
Attend thou here—'Tis time, my trusty soldier,
My long-tried friend, to lay unfolded to thee
The close resolves and councils of my heart.
The tedious length of a precarious siege
May damp the present ardour of my troops,
And check me in the height of my career.
Let us not give deluded mortals leisure
By reason to disperse the mystic gloom
We have cast about us—Prepossession, friend,
Reigns monarch of the million—Mecca's crowd
Gaze at my rapid victories, and think
Some awful power directs my arm to conquest;
But whilst our friends once more renew their efforts
To win the wavering people to our interest,
What think'st thou, say, of Zaphna, and Palmira?
Mir. As of thy most resigned and faithful vassals.
Mah. Oh Mirvan! they are the deadliest of my foes.
Mir. How!
Mah. Yes, they love each other——
Mir. Well—what crime?——
Mah. What crime! dost say?—Learn all my frailty, then——
My life's a combat: keen austerity
Subjects my nature to abstemious bearings:
I have banished from my lips that traitorous liquor,
That either works to practises of outrage,
Or melts the manly breast to woman's weakness;
Or on the burning sands or desert rocks
With thee I bear the inclemency of climates,
Freeze at the pole, or scorch beneath the line.
For all these toils love only can retaliate,
The only consolation or reward,
Fruit of my labours, idol of my incense,
And sole divinity, that I adore;
Know then, that I prefer this young Palmira
To all the ripened beauties, that attend me;
Dwell on her accents, dote upon her smiles,
And am not mine but her's. Now judge, my friend,
How vast the jealous transports of thy master,
When at his feet he daily hears this charmer
Avow a foreign love, and, insolent,
Give Mahomet a rival!
Mir. How! and Mahomet
Not instantly revenge——
Mah. Ah! should he not?
But better to detest him know him better:
Learn, then, that both my rival and my love
Sprang from the loins of this audacious traitor.
Mir. Alcanor!
Mah. Is their father; old Hercides,
To whose sage institution I commit
My captive infants, late revealed it to me—
Perdition! I myself light up their flame,
And fed it, till I set myself on fire.
Well, means must be employed; but see, the father;
He comes this way, and launches from his eye
Malignant sparks of enmity and rage.
Mirvan, see all ta'en care of; let Hercides,
With his escort, beset yon gate; bid Ali
Make proper disposition round the temple;
This done, return, and render me account
Of what success we meet with 'mongst the people:
Then, Mirvan, we'll determine or to loose,
Or bridle in our vengeance, as its suits.
[*Exit Mirvan.*

Enter ALCANOR.

Mah. Why dost thou start, Alcanor? Whence that horror?
Is then my sight so baneful to thee?
Alc. Heavens!
Must I then bear this? must I meet in Mecca,
On terms of peace, this spoiler of the earth?

Mah. Approach, old man, without a blush; since Heaven,
For some high end, decrees our future union.
Alc. I blush not for myself, but thee, thou tyrant!
For thee, bad man! who comest, with serpent-guile,
To sow dissention in the realms of peace;
Thy very name sets families at variance,
'Twixt son and father bursts the bonds of nature,
And scares endearment from the nuptial pillow!
Even truce with thee is a new stratagem.
And is it, insolent dissembler! thus
Thou comest, to give the sons of Mecca peace,
And me an unknown god?
Mah. Were I to answer any but Alcanor,
That unknown god should speak in thunder for me;
But here, with thee, I'd parley as a man.
Alc. What canst thou say? what urge in thy defence?
What right hast thou received to plant new faiths,
Or lay a claim to royalty and priesthood?
Mah. The right, that a resolved and towering spirit
Has o'er the grovelling instinct of the vulgar.—
Alc. Patience, good Heavens! have I not known thee, Mahomet,
When void of wealth, inheritance, or fame,
Ranked with the lowest of the low at Mecca?
Mah. Dost thou not know, thou haughty feeble man,
That the low insect, lurking in the grass,
And the imperial eagle, which aloft
Ploughs the etherial plain, are both alike
In the Eternal eye!—Mortals are equal:
It is not birth, magnificence, or power,
But virtue only, makes the difference 'twixt them.
Alc. What sacred truth from what polluted lips! [*Aside.*
Mah. By virtue's ardent pinions borne on high,
Heaven met my zeal, gave me, in solemn charge,
Its sacred laws, then bade me on and publish.
Alc. And did Heaven bid thee on, and plunder too?
Mah. My law is active, and inflames the soul
With thirst of glory What can thy dumb gods?
What laurels spring beneath their sooty altars?
Thy slothful sect disgrace the human kind,
Enervate lifeless images of men!
Mine bear the intrepid soul; my faith makes heroes.
Alc. Go, preach these doctrines at Medina, where,
By prostate wretches, thou art raised to homage.
Mah. Hear me: thy Mecca trembles at my name;
If, therefore, thou wouldst save thyself or city,
Embrace my proffered friendship.—What to-day
I thus solicit, I'll command to-morrow.
Alc. Contract with thee a friendship! frontless man!
Knowest thou a god can work that miracle?
Mah. I do—Necessity—thy interest.
Alc. Interest is thy god, Equity is mine.
Propose the tie of this unnatural union;
Say, is it the loss of thy ill-fated son,
Who, in the field, fell victim to my rage,
Or the dear blood of my poor captive children,
Shed by thy butchering hands?
Mah. Ay, 'tis thy children.
Mark me, then, well, and learn the important secret,
Which I'm sole master of——Thy children live.
Alc. Live!
Mah. Yes——both live——
Alc. What sayest thou? Both!
Mah. Ay, both.
Alc. And dost thou not beguile me?
Mah. No, old man.
Alc. Propitious Heavens! Say, Mahomet, for now,
Methinks, I could hold endless converse with thee;
Say what's their portion! liberty or bondage?
Mah. Bred in my camp, and tutored in my law,
I hold the balance of their destinies:
And now 'tis on the turn—their lives or deaths—
'Tis thine to say which shall preponderate.
Alc. Mine! can I save them? name the mighty ransom——
If I must bear their chains, double the weight,
And I will kiss the hand, that puts them on;
Or, if my streaming blood must be the purchase,
Drain every sluice and channel of my body,
My swelling veins will burst to give it passage.
Mah. I'll tell thee, then—renounce thy pagan faith,
Abolish thy vain gods, and——
Alc. Ha!
Mah. Nay, more,
Surrender Mecca to me, quit this temple,
Assist me to impose upon the world,
Thunder my Koran to the gazing crowd,
Proclaim me for their prophet and their king,
And be a glorious patron of credulity
To Korah's stubborn tribe. These terms performed,
Thy son shall be restored, and Mahomet's self
Will deign to wed thy daughter.
Alc. Hear me, Mahomet——
I am a father, and this bosom boasts
A heart as tender as e'er parent bore.
After a fifteen years of anguish for them,
Once more to view my children, clasp them to me,
And die in their embraces—melting thought!
But were I doomed or to enslave my country,
And help to spread black error o'er the earth,
Or to behold these blood-embrued hands
Deprive me of them both—Know me, then, Mahomet,

I'd not admit a doubt to cloud my choice——
[*Looking earnestly at Mahomet, for some time, before he speaks.*
Farewell. [*Exit Alcanor.*
Mah. Why, fare thee well then—churlish dotard!
Inexorable fool! Now, by my arms,
I will have great revenge; I'll meet thy scorn
With treble retribution.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, my Mirvan,
What sayest thou to it now?
Mir. Why, that Alcanor
Or we must fall.
Mah. Fall, then, the obdurate rebel!
Mir. The truce expires to morrow, when Alcanor
Again is Mecca's master, and has vowed
Destruction on thy head: the senate, too,
Have passed thy doom.
Mah. Those heart-chilled paltry babblers,
Placed on the bench of sloth, with ease can nod,
And vote a man to death! Why don't the cowards
Stand me in yonder plain? With half their numbers
I drove them headlong to their walls for shelter,
And he was deemed the wisest senator,
That entered first the gate; but now they think
They've got me in the toil, their spirits mount,
And they could prove most valorous assassins.—
Well, this I like—I always owed my greatness
To opposition; had I not met with struggles,
I'd been obscure.—Enough.—Perish Alcanor!
He marbled up, the pliant populace,
Those dupes of novelty, will bend before us,
Like osiers to a hurricane——
Mir. No time
Is to be lost.
Mah. But for a proper arm;
For, however irksome, we must save
Appearances, and mask it with the vulgar.
Mir. True, my sage chief.—What think'st thou, then, of Zaphna?
Mah. Of Zaphna, sayest thou!
Mir. Yes, Alcanor's hostage——
He can, in private, do thee vengeance on him:
Thy other favourites, of maturer age,
And more discreetly zealous, would not risk it.
Youth is the stock, whence grafted superstition
Shoots with unbounded vigour. He's a slave
To thy despotic faith; and, urged by thee,
However mild his nature may appear,
Howe'er humane and noble is his spirit,
Or strong his reason, where allowed to reason,
He would, for Heaven's sake, martyr half mankind.
Mah. The brother of Palmira!
Mir. Yes, that brother,
The only son of thy outrageous foe,
And the incestuous rival of thy love.
Mah. I hate the stripling, loathe his very name;
The manes of my son, too, cry for vengeance
On the cursed sire; but then thou know'st my love,
Know'st from whose blood she sprang: this staggers, Mirvan;
And yet I'm here surrounded with a gulf
Ready to swallow me; come, too, in quest
Of altars and a throne—What must be done?—
My warring passions, like contending clouds,
When fraught with thunder's fatal fuel, burst
Upon themselves, and rend me with the shock.
And shall enervating contagious love
Hag my aspiring spirit, sink me down
To woman's shackles, make a lapthing of me?
Glory! that must not be! ambition still,
And great revenge, impetuous urge their claims,
And must be noticed. Mirvan, sound this youth;
Touch not at once upon the startling purpose,
But make due preparation.
Mir. I'll attack him
With all the forces of enthusiasm;
There lies our strength.
Mah. First, then, a solemn vow
To act whatever Heaven by me enjoins him;
Next, omens, dreams, and visions, may be pleaded;
Hints, too, of black designs, by this Alcanor,
Upon Palmira's virtue and his life.——
But to the proof.—Be now propitious, Fortune!
Then love, ambition, vengeance, jointly triumph.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A grand apartment.*

Enter ZAPHNA *and* PALMIRA.

Zaph. ALCANOR claims a private conference with us!
What has he to unfold?
Pal. I tremble, Zaphna.
Zaph. Time press'd too, did he say?
Pal. He did; then cast
A look so piercing on me, it o'erwhelmed
My face with deep confusion; this he marked;
Then, starting, left me.
Zaph. aside.] Ha! this gives me fear,
That Mirvan's jealousies are too well grounded;
But I must not distract her tender bosom
With visionary terrors. [*To Pal.*] Both in private?
Pal. In private both.
Zaph. Her virtue and my life! [*Apart.*
It cannot be; so reverend a form
Could ne'er be pander to such black devices.

Pal. But let us shun it, Zaphna; much I fear
Alcanor has deceived us: dread the treachery
Of this blood-thirsty senate. Trust me, Zaphna,
They have sworn the extirpation of our faith,
Nor care by what vile means—
Zaph. My soul's best treasure,
For whose security my every thought
Is up in arms, regardless of my own;
Shun thou Alcanor's presence. This hour, Palmira,
Mirvan, by order of our royal pontiff,
Prepares to solemnize some act of worship
Of a more hallowed and mysterious kind
Than will admit of vulgar eye; myself
Alone am honoured to assist.
Pal. Alone!
Zaph. Yes, to devote myself by solemn vow
For some great act, of which my fair's the prize.
Pal. What act?
Zaph. No matter, since my loved Palmira
Shall be the glorious recompence—
Pal. Oh, Zaphna!
Methinks I do not like this secret vow.
Why must not I be present! were I with thee,
I should not be so anxious;
For trust me, Zaphna, my affection for thee
Is of that pure disinterested nature,
So free from passion's taint, I have no one wish
To have thee more than thus, have thee my friend,
Share thy loved converse, wait upon thy welfare,
And view thee with a sister's spotless eye.
Zaph. Angelic excellence!
Pal. And let me tell thee,
This Mirvan, this fierce Mirvan, gives me terrors:
So far from tendering consolation to me,
His theme is blood and slaughter. As I met him,
His eyes flamed fury, whilst in dubious phrase
He thus bespoke me—'The destroying angel
'Must be let loose—Palmira, Heaven ordains
'Some glorious deed for thee, yet hid in darkness;
'Learn an implicit reverence for its will;
'And, above all, I warn thee, fear for Zaphna.
Zaph. What could he mean? can I believe, Alcanor,
Thy fair deportment but a treacherous mask?
Yet spite of all the rage that ought to fire me
Against this rebel to our faith and prophet,
I have held me happy in his friendship,
And bondage wore the livery of choice.
Pal. How has Heaven fraught our love-linked hearts, my Zaphna,
With the same thoughts, aversions and desires!
But for thy safety and our dread religion,
That thunders hatred to all infidels,
With great remorse I should accuse Alcanor.
Zaph. Let us shake off this vain remorse, Palmira,
Resign ourselves to Heaven, and act its pleasure.
The hour is come, that I must pledge my vow:
Doubt not but the Supreme, who claims this service,
Will prove propitious to our chaste endearments.
Farewell, my love; I fly to gain the summit
Of earth's felicity—to gain Palmira. [*Exit.*
Pal. Where'er I turn me here, 'tis all suspicion.
What means this vow? Mirvan, I like thee not:
Alcanor too distracts my timorous breast:
Even Mahomet's self I dread, whilst I invoke him.
Like one benighted 'midst a place of tombs,
I gaze around me, start at every motion,
And seem hemmed in by visionary spectres.
All righteous Power, whom, trembling, I adore,
And blindly follow, oh deliver me
From these heart-rending terrors!—Ha! who's here?

Enter MAHOMET.

'Tis he! 'tis Mahomet himself! kind Heaven
Has sent him to my aid—My gracious lord!
Protect the dear, dear idol of my soul!
Save Zaphna; guard him from ——
Mah. From what!—why Zaphna?
Whence this vain terror? is he not with us?
Pal. Oh, sir, you double now my apprehensions!
Those broken accents and that eager look
Shew you have anguish smothering at the heart,
And prove for once, that Mahomet's a mortal.
Mah. apart.] Ha! I shall turn a traitor to myself—
Oh woman! woman!—Hear me; ought I not
To be enraged at thy profane attachment!
How could thy breast, without the keenest sting,
Harbour one thought not dictated by me?
Is that young mind, I took such toil to form,
Turned an ingrate and infidel at once?
Away, rebellious maid——
Pal. What dost thou say,
My royal lord? Thus prostrate at your feet
Let me implore forgiveness, if in aught
I have offended: talk not to me thus;
A frown from thee, my father and my king,
Is death to poor Palmira. Say then, Mahomet,
Didst thou not in this very place permit him
To tender me his vows?
Mah. apart.] His vows! perdition!
How the soft traitress racks me!—Rise, Palmira—
Apart.] Down, rebel love! I must be calm—
Come hither;
Beware, rash maid, of such imprudent steps;
They lead to guilt. What wild pernicious errors
Mayn't the heart yield to, if not greatly watched!
Pal. In loving Zaphna sure it cannot err;
There's nothing wild, nothing pernicious—
Mah. How!
This theme delights you———
Pal. I must own it does.
Yes, my great master, for I still have thought
That Heaven itself approved of my affection,

And gave a sanction to our mutual ardours.
Can what was virtue once be now a crime?
Can I be guilty——
Mah. Yes—towards me you are——
You, nursed from infancy beneath my eye,
Child of my care and pupil of my faith,
You, whom my partial fondness still distinguished
From all the captive youths that graced my triumphs,
And you who now, without my leave, permit
A slave to bear thee from my sight for ever.
Pal. No, we both live, nay more, would die for thee:
And oh, my lord! if all that earth can offer
Of grandeur, opulence, or pleasure, e'er
Shall make me deaf to gratitude's demands,
May Zaphna's self be evidence against me,
And plead for double vengeance on my treachery!
Mah. apart.] Zaphna again! Furies! I shall relapse,
And make her witness of my weakness.
Pal. Sir!
What sudden start of passion arms that eye?
Mah. Oh, nothing: pray retire a while: take courage:
I'm not at all displeased: 'twas but to sound
The depth of thy young heart. I praise thy choice:
Trust then thy dearest interests to my bosom;
But know your fate depends on your obedience.
If I have been a guardian to your youth,
If all my lavish bounties past weigh aught,
Deserve the future blessings which await you.
Howe'er the voice of heaven dispose of Zaphna,
Confirm him in the path where duty leads,
That he may keep his vow and merit thee.
Pal. Distrust him not, my sovereign; noble Zaphna
Disdains to lag in love or glory's course.
Mah. Enough of words—
Pal. As boldly I've avowed
The love I bear that hero at your feet,
I'll now to him, and fire his generous breast
To prove the duty he has sworn to thee.
[*Exit Palmira.*
Mah. Confusion! must I, spite of me, be made
The confidant of her incestuous passion?
What could I say? such sweet simplicity
Lured down my rage, and innocently winged
The arrow through my heart. And shall I bear this?
Be made the sport of curst Alcanor's house?
Checked in my rapid progress by the sire,
Supplanted in my love by this rash boy,
And made a gentle pander to the daughter?
Perdition on the whole detested race!

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Now, Mahomet, is the time to seize on Mecca,
Crush this Alcanor, and enjoy Palmira.
This night the old enthusiast offers incense
To his vain gods in sacred Caabo:
Zaphna, who flames with zeal for Heaven and thee,
May be won o'er to seize that lucky moment.
Mah. He shall; it must be so; he's born to act
The glorious crime; and let him be at once
The instrument and victim of the murder.
My law, my love, my vengeance, my own safety,
Have doomed it so—But, Mirvan, dost thou think
His youthful courage, nursed in superstition,
Can e'er be worked—
Mir. I tell thee, Mahomet,
He's tutored to accomplish thy design.
Palmira too, who thinks thy will is Heaven's,
Will nerve his arm to execute thy pleasure.
Love and enthusiasm blind her youth:
They're still most zealous who're most ignorant.
Mah. Didst thou engage him by a solemn vow?
Mir. I did, with all the enthusiastic pomp
Thy law enjoins; then gave him, as from thee,
A consecrated sword to act thy will.
Oh, he is burning with religious fury!
Mah. But hold, he comes—

Enter ZAPHNA.

Child of that awful and tremendous power,
Whose laws I publish, whose behests proclaim,
Listen, whilst I unfold his sacred will:
'Tis thine to vindicate his ways to man,
'Tis thine his injured worship to avenge.
Zaph. Thou lord of nations, delegate of Heaven,
Sent to shed day o'er the benighted world,
Oh say in what can Zaphna prove his duty!
Instruct me how a frail earth-prisoned mortal
Can, or avenge, or vindicate a god.
Mah. By thy weak arm he deigns to prove his cause,
And launch his vengeance on blaspheming rebels.
Zaph. What glorious action, what illustrious danger,
Does that Supreme, whose image thou, demand?
Place me, oh place me, in the front of battle,
'Gainst odds innumerable! try me there;
Or, if a single combat claim my might,
The stoutest Arab may step forth and see,
If Zaphna fail to greet him as he ought.
Mah. Oh, greatly said, my son; 'tis inspiration!
But heed me: 'tis not by a glaring act
Of human valour Heaven has willed to prove thee;
This infidels themselves may boast, when led
By ostentation, rage, or brute-like rashness.
To do whate'er Heaven gives in sacred charge,
Nor dare to sound its fathomless decrees,
This, and this only's meritorious zeal.
Attend, adore, obey; thou shalt be armed
By death's remorseless angel, which awaits me.

Zaph. Speak out, pronounce; what victim must I offer?
What tyrant sacrifice? whose blood requirest thou?
Mah. The blood of a detested infidel,
A murderer, a foe to Heaven and me,
A wretch, who slew my child, blasphemes my god,
And, like a huge Colossus, bears a world
Of impious opposition to my faith:
The blood of—curst Alcanor!
Zaph. I!—Alcanor!
Mah. What! dost thou hesitate? Rash youth, beware;
He that deliberates, is sacrilegious.
Far, far from me be those audacious mortals,
Who for themselves would impiously judge,
Or see with their own eyes; who dares to think,
Was never born a proselyte for me.
Know who I am; know on this very spot
I have charged thee with the just decree of Heaven,
And when that Heaven requires of thee no more
Than the bare offering of its deadliest foe,
Nay, thy foe too, and mine, why dost thou balance,
As thy own father were the victim claimed!
Go, vile idolater! false Musselman!
Go seek another master, a new faith!
Zaph. Oh Mahomet!
Mah. Just when the prize is ready,
When fair Palmira's destined to thy arms——
But what's Palmira? or what's heaven to thee,
Thou poor weak rebel to thy faith and love!
Go serve and cringe to our detested foe.
Zaph. Oh pardon, Mahomet! methinks I hear
The oracle of Heaven—It shall be done.
Mah. Obey then, strike, and for his impious blood,
Palmira's charms and Paradise be thine.
Apart to Mirvan.] Mirvan, attend him close, and let thy eyes
Be fixed on every movement of his soul.
[*Exeunt.*
Zaph. Soft, let me think—This duty wears the face
Of something more than monstrous—Pardon, Heaven!
To sacrifice an innocent old man,
Weighed down with age, unsuccoured and unarmed!
When I am hostage for his safety too!——
No matter, Heaven has chose me for the duty;
My vow is past and must be straight fulfilled.
Ye stern relentless ministers of wrath,
Spirits of vengeance! by whose ruthless hands
The haughty tyrants of the earth have bled,
Come to my succour, to my flaming zeal
Join your determined courage;
And thou, angel
Of Mahomet, exterminating angel!
That mow'st down nations to prepare his passage,
Support my faltering will, harden my heart,
Lest nature, pity, plead Alcanor's cause,
And wrest the dagger from me.
Ha! who comes here?

Enter ALCANOR.

Alc. Whence, Zaphna, that deep gloom,
That, like a blasting mildew on the ear
Of promised harvest, blackens o'er thy visage?
Grieve not, that here, through form, thou art confined;
I hold thee not as hostage, but as friend,
And make thy safety partner with my own.
Zaph. And make my safety partner with thy own! [*Aside.*
Alc. The bloody carnage, by this truce suspended
For a few moments, like a torrent checked
In its full flow, will, with redoubled strength,
Bear all before it——
In this impending scene of public horror,
Be then, dear youth! these mansions thy asylum:
I'll be thy hostage now, and with my life
Will answer, that no mischief shall befall thee.
I know not why, but thou art precious to me.
Zaph. Heaven, duty, gratitude, humanity! [*Aside.*
What didst thou say, Alcanor? Didst thou say,
That thy own roof should shield me from the tempest?
That thy own life stood hostage for my safety?
Alc. Why thus amazed at my compassion for thee?
I am a man myself, and that's enough
To make me feel the woes of other men,
And labour to redress them.
Zaph. [*Aside.*] What melody these accents make!
And whilst my own religion spurs to murder,
His precepts of humanity prevail.
[*To Alcanor.*] Can, then, a foe to Mahomet's sacred law
Be virtue's friend?
Alc. Thou know'st but little, Zaphna,
If thou dost think true virtue is confined
To climes or systems; no, it flows spontaneous,
Like life's warm stream, throughout the whole creation,
And beats the pulse of every healthful heart.
How canst thou, Zaphna, worship for thy god
A being, claiming cruelty and murders
From his adorers? Such is thy master's god.
Zaph. [*Aside.*] Oh, my relenting soul! thou'rt almost thawed
From thy resolve—I pray you, sir, no more.
Peace, reason, peace!
Alc. [*Aside.*] The more I view him, talk with him, observe
His understanding towering above his age,
His candour, which even bigotry can't smother,
The more my breast takes interest in his welfare.

[*To Zaphna*] Zaphna, come near—I oft have thought to ask thee,
To whom thou owest thy birth; whose generous blood
Swells thy young veins, and mantles at thy heart.
Zaph. That dwells in darkness; no one friendly beam
E'er gave me glimpse, from whom I am descended.
The camp of godlike Mahomet has been
My cradle and my country; whilst, of all
His captive infants, no one more has shared
The sunshine of his clemency and care.
Alc. I do not blame thy gratitude, young man:
But why was Mahomet thy benefactor?
Why was not I? I envy him that glory.
Why, then, this impious man has been a father
Alike to thee and to the fair Palmira?
Zaph. Oh!
Alc. What is the cause, my Zaphna, of that sigh,
And all that language of a smothered anguish?
Why didst thou snatch away thy cordial eye,
That shone on me before?
Zaph. [*Aside.*] Oh my torn heart!
Palmira's name revives the racking thought
Of my near blunted purpose.
Alc. Come, my friend;
The floodgates of destruction, soon thrown open,
Will pour in ruin on that curse of nations.
If I can save but thee and fair Palmira
From this o'erflowing tide, let all the rest
Of his abandoned minions be the victims
For your deliverance—I must save your blood.
Zaph. [*Aside.*] Just Heaven! and is it not I must shed his blood?
Alc. Nay, tremble, if thou dar'st to hesitate.
Follow me straight.

Enter PHARON.

Pha. Alcanor, read that letter,
Put in my hands this moment by an Arab,
With utmost stealth, and air bespeaking somewhat
Of high importance.
Alc. [*Reads.*] Whence is this?—Hercides!
Cautious, my eyes! be sure you're not mistaken
In what you here insinuate. Gracious Heaven!
Will then thy Providence at length o'errule
My wayward fate, and by one matchless blessing
Sweeten the sufferings of a threescore years!
[*After looking for some time earnestly at Zaphna.*
Follow me.
Zaph. Thee!—But Mahomet—
Alc. Thy life
And all its future bliss dwells on this moment.
Follow, I say. [*Exeunt Alcanor and Pharon.*

Enter MIRVAN *and his attendants, hastily, on the other side of the Stage.*

Mir. [*To Zaphna.*] Traitor, turn back! what means
This conference with the foe? To Mahomet
Away this instant; he commands thy presence.
Zaph. [*Aside.*] Where am I? Heavens! how shall I now resolve?
How act? A precipice on every side
Awaits me, and the first least step's perdition.
Mir. Young man, our prophet brooks not such delay;
Go, stop the bolt, that's ready to be launched
On thy rebellious head.
Zaph. Yes, and renounce
This horrid vow, that's poison to my soul.
[*Exit with Mirvan, &c.*

Re-enter ALCANOR *and* PHARON.

Alc. Where is this Zaphna?—But he flies me still:
In vain I call in all the softening arts
Of pity, love, and friendship, to engage him:
His breast is seared by that impostor's precepts
'Gainst all who bid defiance to his laws.
But, Pharon, didst thou mark the baneful gloom,
The somewhat like reluctance, rage, and pity,
That, blended, sat upon his pensive brow?
Pha. I did; there is something at his heart—
Alc. There is——
Would I could fathom it! This letter, Pharon,
His aspect, age, the transport that I taste,
When he is near me; the anxiety
His absence gives, do too much violence
To my distracted sense. Hercides here
Desires to see me; 'twas his barbarous hands,
That robbed me of my children; they are living,
He tells me, under Mahomet's protection,
And he has something to unfold, on which
Their destiny and mine depend. This Zaphna
And young Palmira, vassals of that tyrant,
Are ignorant from whom they are descended.
Imagination's pregnant with that thought.
My wishes mock me. Sinking with my grief,
I blindly catch at every flattering error,
And supplicate deception's self for succour.
Pha. Hope, but yet fear, Alcanor: think, my chief,
How many infants from their parents torn,
Ere conscious whose they are, attend that tyrant,
Drink in his dictates, place their being in him,
And deem him an infallible dispenser
Of Heaven's decisions———
Alc. Well, no matter, Pharon;
At noon of night conduct Hercides hither;
Thy master in the adjoining fane once more
Will importune the gods with prayers and incense,
That he may save his friends, and see his children.
Pha. Thou shalt not find thy Pharon slack in aught,
That tends to thy deliverance from this anguish.
[*Exit Phar.*
Alc. Just Heaven! if, by erroneous thought or act,
I have drawn down your fierce displeasure on me,

Point me to right! I'll onward to its goal
With double energy, will expiate all,
That, in the days of ignorance, might offend;
Only restore my children to my care,
Give to my craving arms my hapless children,
That I may form them, turn them back from wrong,
Weed their young minds from those pernicious errors
The arch-impostor has implanted in them,
Train them in virtue's school, and lead them on
To deeds of glorious and immortal honour.
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—MAHOMET'S *apartment.*

MAHOMET *alone.*

Mah. Ambition knows not conscience——
Well, this Zaphna
Is fixed at length—I lessoned him so home,
Dealt to his young enthusiastic soul
Such promises and threats———

Enter MIRVAN.

Mirvan, what news?
Mir. Oh, Mahomet, I fear the nice woven web
Of our design's unravelled. Ere thy spirit
Had re-inflamed young Zaphna with the thirst
Of old Alcanor's blood, he had revealed
The dreadful purpose to Hercides—
Mah. Ha!
Mir. Hercides loves the youth, and Zaphna still
Has held him as a father.
Mah. That I like not.
What does Hercides say? thinks he with us?
Mir. Oh no; he trembles at the very thought
Of this dread scene, compassionates Alcanor,
And——
Mah. He's but a half friend then, and a half friend
Is not a span from traitor. Mirvan, Mirvan,
A dangerous witness must be some way dealt with:
Am I obeyed?
Mir. 'Tis done.
Mah. Then for the rest——
Or e'er the harbinger of morrow's dawn
Gleam in the east, Alcanor, thou must set,
Or Mahomet and all his hopes must perish:
That's the first step; then, Zaphna, next for thee!
Soon as thy hands have dealt the midnight mischief,
In thy own blood the secret must be drowned.
Thus quit of son and father (those curst rivals,
Who elbow me at once in love and grandeur)
Both Mecca and Palmira shall be mine.
Oh towering prospect! how it fills the eye
Of my aspiring and enamoured soul!
Night! put on double sable, that no star
May be a spy on those dark deeds——Well, Mirvan,
Shall we accomplish this?
Mir. We shall, my chief.
Mah. What though I seize his life, from whom she sprung?
He's not her father, as she knows it not.
Trust me, those partial ties of blood and kindred
Are but the illusive taints of education:
What we call nature is mere habit, Mirvan;
That habit's on our side; for the whole study
Of this young creature's life has been obedience,
To think, believe, and act as pleasured me.
But hold; the hour, on which our fortune hangs,
Is now at hand. While Zaphna seeks the temple,
Let us look round us, see that not a wheel
Lag in the vast machine we have at work:
It is success, that consecrates our actions;
The vanquished rebel as a rebel dies,
The victor rebel plumes him on a throne.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The temple.*

Enter ZAPHNA, *with a drawn sword in his hand.*

Zaph. Well then, it must be so; I must discharge
This cruel duty—Mahomet enjoins it,
And Heaven, through him, demands it of my hands.
Horrid, though sacred, act!—my soul shrinks back,
And wont admit conviction—Ay, but Heaven!
Heaven's call I must obey—Oh dire obedience!
What dost thou cost me! my humanity!
Why, duty, art thou thus at war with nature?

Enter PALMIRA.

Thou here, Palmira! oh! what fatal transport
Leads thee to this sad place, these dark abodes,
Sacred to death? Thou hast no business here.
Pal. Oh, Zaphna, fear and love have been my guides.
What horrid sacrifice is this enjoined thee?
What victim does the god of Mahomet
Claim from thy tender hand?
Zaph. Oh, my guardian angel,
Speak, resolve me;
How can assassination be a virtue?
How can the gracious parent of mankind
Delight in mankind's sufferings? May not this prophet,
This great announcer of his heavenly will,
Mistake it once?
Pal. Oh, tremble to examine.
He sees our hearts—To doubt is to blaspheme.
Zaph. Be steady, then, my soul, firm to thy purpose,

And let religion steel thee against pity.
Come forth, thou foe to Mahomet, and Heaven,
And meet the doom thy rebel faith deserves!
Come forth, Alcanor!
Pal. Who, Alcanor!
Zaph. Yes.
Pal. The good Alcanor?
Zaph. Why do you call him good?
Curse on his pagan virtues! he must die;
So Mahomet commands: and yet methinks
Some other deity arrests my arm,
And whispers to my heart—Zaphna, forbear!
Pal. Distracting state!
Zaph. Alas! my dear Palmira,
I'm weak, and shudder at this bloody business.
Help me, oh help, Palmira! I am torn,
Distracted with this conflict.
Zeal, horror, love, and pity, seize my breast,
And drag it different ways. Alas! Palmira,
You see me tossing on a sea of passions;
'Tis thine, my angel, to appease this tempest,
Fix my distracted will, and teach me—
Pal. What!
What can I teach thee in this strife of passions?
Oh Zaphna! I revere our holy prophet,
Think all his laws are registered in heaven,
And every mandate minted in the skies.
Zaph. But then, to break through hospitality,
And murder him, by whom we are protected!
Pal. Oh, poor Alcanor! generous, good Alcanor!
My heart bleeds for thee.
Zaph. Know then, unless I act this horrid scene,
Unless I plunge this dagger in the breast
Of that old man, I must—I must—
Pal. What—
Zaph. Must, Palmira———
(Oh agonizing thought!) lose thee for ever.
Pal. Am I the price of good Alcanor's blood?
Zaph. So Mahomet ordains.
Pal. Horrible dowry!
Zaph. Thou knowest the curse our prophet has denounced,
Of endless tortures on the disobedient;
Thou knowest with what an oath I have bound myself
To vindicate his laws, extirpate all,
That dare oppose his progress; say then, fair one,
Thou tutoress divine, instruct me how,
How to obey my chief, perform my oath,
Yet list to mercy's call!
Pal. This rends my heart.
Zaph. How to avoid being banished thee for ever!
Pal. Oh, save me from that thought! must that e'er be?
Zaph. It must not: thou hast now pronounced his doom.
Pal. What doom?—Have I!
Zaph. Yes, thou hast sealed his death.
Pal. I seal his death!—Did I?
Zaph. 'Twas Heaven spoke by thee; thou'rt its oracle,
And I'll fulfil its laws. This is the hour,
In which he pays, at the adjoining altar,
Black rites to his imaginary gods.
Follow me not, Palmira.
Pal. I must follow;
I will not, dare not, leave thee.
Zaph. Gentle maid,
I beg thee fly these walls; thou canst not bear
This horrid scene—Oh, these are dreadful moments!
Begone—quick—this way—
Pal. No, I follow thee,
Retread thy every footstep, though they lead
To the dark gulph of death.
Zaph. Thou matchless maid!—to the dire trial then. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE *draws, and discovers the inner part of the temple, with a pagan altar and images;* ALCANOR *addressing himself to the idols.*

Alc. Eternal Powers! that deign to bless these mansions,
Protectors of the sons of Ishmael,
Crush, crush this blasphemous invader's force,
And turn him back with shame! If power be your's,
Oh! shield your injured votaries, and lay
Oppression, bleeding at your altar's foot.

Enter ZAPHNA *and* PALMIRA.

Pal. entering.] Act not this bloody deed! oh save him, save him!
Zaph. Save him, and lose both paradise and thee!
Pal. Hah, yon' he stands—Oh! Zaphna, all my blood is frozen at the sight!
Alc. 'Tis in your own behalf that I implore
The terrors of your might; swift, swiftly
Pour vengeance on this vile apostate's head,
Who dares profanely wrest your thunder from you,
And lodge it with an unknown fancied god.
Zaph. Hear how the wretch blasphemes! So, now—
Pal. Hold, Zaphna!
Zaph. Let me go—
Pal. I cannot—cannot.
Alc. But if, for reasons which dim-sighted mortals
Can't look into, you'll crown this daring rebel
With royalty and priesthood, take my life!
And if, ye gracious Powers! you have aught of bliss
In store for me, at my last hour permit me
To see my children, pour my blessing on them,
Expire in their dear arms, and let them close
These eyes, which then would wish no after-sight!
Pal. His children, did he say?
Zaph. I think he did——

Alc. For this I'll at your altar pay my vows,
And make it smoke with incense. [*Retires behind the altar.*
Zaph. Now's the time; [*Drawing his sword.*
Insulting Heaven, he flies to stones for refuge:
Now let me strike!
Pal. Stay but one moment, Zaphna.
Zaph. It must not be—unhand me.
Pal. What to do?
Zaph. To serve my God and king, and merit thee.
[*Breaking from Palmira, and going towards the altar, he starts, and stops short.*
Ha! what are ye, ye terrifying shades?
What means this lake of blood, that lies before me?
Pal. Oh Zaphna! let us fly these horrid roofs.
Zaph. No, no—Go on, ye ministers of death;
Lead me the way: I'll follow ye.
Pal. Stay, Zaphna!
Heap no more horrors on me; I'm expiring
Beneath the load.
Zaph. Be hushed—the altar trembles!
What means that omen! does it spur to murder,
Or would it rein me back? No, 'tis the voice
Of Heaven itself, that chides my lingering hand.
Now send up thither all thy vows, Palmira,
Whilst I obey its will and give the stroke.
[*Goes out behind the altar after Alcanor.*
Pal. What vows? Will Heaven receive a murderer's vows!
For sure I'm such, whilst I prevent not murder.
Why beats my heart thus? what soft voice is this,
That's waken'd in my soul, and preaches mercy?
If Heaven demands his life, dare I oppose?
Is it my place to judge?—Ha! that dire groan
Proclaims the bloody business is about.
Zaphna! oh Zaphna!

Re-enter ZAPHNA.

Zaph. Ha! where am I?
Who calls me? where's Palmira? she's not here:
What fiend has snatched her from me?
Pal. Heavens! he raves!
Dost thou not know me, Zaphna! her, who lives
For thee alone!—Why dost thou gaze thus on me?
Zaph. Where are we?
Pal. Hast thou then discharged
The horrid duty?
Zaph. What dost thou say?
Pal. Alcanor——
Zaph. Alcanor! what Alcanor?
Pal. Gracious Heaven,
Look down upon him!
Let's be gone, my Zaphna!
Let's fly this place!
Zaph. Oh, whither fly! to whom?
D'ye see these hands? who will receive these hands?
Pal. Oh, come, and let me wash them with my tears!
Zaph. Who art thou! let me lean on thee—I find
My powers returning. Is it thou, Palmira?
Where have I been? what have I done?
Pal. I know not:
Think on't no more.
Zaph. But I must think and talk on't too, Palmira;
I seiz'd the victim by his hoary locks—
(Thou, Heaven, didst will it)
Then, shuddering with horror, buried strait
The poignard in his breast. I had redoubled
The bloody plunge—(what cannot zeal persuade!)
But that the venerable sire poured forth
So piteous a groan! looked so, Palmira——
And with a feeble voice, cried, Is it Zaphna?
I could no more. Oh? hadst thou seen, my love,
The fell, fell dagger in his bosom, viewed
His dying face, where sat such dignity,
Clothed with compassion towards his base assassin!
[*Throwing himself on the ground.*
The dire remembrance weighs me to the earth—
Here let me die——
Pal. Rise, my loved Zaphna! rise,
And let us fly to Mahomet for protection:
If we are found in these abodes of slaughter,
Tortures and death attend us: let us fly!
Zaph. starting up.] I did fly at that blasting sight, Palmira,
When drawing out the fatal steel he cast
Such tender looks! I fled—the fatal steel,
The voice, the tender looks, the bleeding victim
Blessing his murderer, I could not fly:
No, they clung to me, rived my throbbing heart,
And set my brain on fire. What have we done!
Pal. Hark! what's that noise! I tremble for thy life:
Oh! in the name of love, by all the ties,
Those sacred ties, that bind thee mine for ever,
I do conjure thee, follow me!
[ALCANOR *comes from behind the altar, leaning against it, with the bloody sword in his hand.*
Zaph. Ha! look, Palmira, see what object's that,
Which bears upon my tortured sight! Is't he?
Or is't his bloody manes come to haunt us?
Pal. 'Tis he himself, poor wretch! struggling with death,
And feebly crawling towards us. Let me fly,
And yield what help I can: let me support thee,
Thou much-lamented, injured, good old man!
Zaph. Why don't I move? my feet are rooted here,
And all my frame is struck and withered up
As with a lightning's blast.
Alc. My gentle maid,
Wilt thou support me?
Weep not, my Palmira.
Pal. I could weep tears of blood, if that would serve thee.

Alc. [*Sitting down.*] Zaphna, come hither; thou hast ta'en my life,
For what offence, or what one thought towards thee,
That anger or malevolence gave birth,
Heaven knows I am unconscious. Do not look so: I see thou dost relent.

Enter PHARON *hastily.*

Pha. [*Starting back.*] Ha! 'tis too late, then.
Alc. Would I could see Hercides!—Pharon, lo!
Thy martyred friend, by his distempered hand,
Is now expiring!
Pha. Dire unnatural crime!
Oh, wretched parricide!—behold thy father!
[*Pointing to Alcanor.*
Zaph. My father!
Pal. Father! ha!
Alc. Mysterious Heaven!
Pha. Hercides, dying by the hand of Mirvan,
Who slew him, lest he should betray the secret,
Saw me approach, and, in the pangs of death,
Cried, 'Fly and save Alcanor; wrest the sword
'From Zaphna's hands, if 'tis not yet too late,
'That's destined for his death; then let him know,
'That Zaphna and Palmira are his children.'
Pal. That Zaphna and Palmira are his children!
Dost hear that, Zaphna?
Zaph. 'Tis enough, my fate!
Canst thou aught more?
Alc. Oh, nature! oh, my children!
By what vile instigations wert thou driven,
Unhappy Zaphna! to this bloody action?
Zaph. [*Falling at his father's feet.*] Oh, I cannot speak!
Restore me, sir, restore that damned weapon,
That I, for once, may make it, as I ought,
An instrument of justice.
Pal. [*Kneeling.*] Oh, my father!
Strike here! the crime was mine; 'twas I alone,
That worked his will to this unnatural deed!
Upon these terms alone he could be mine;
And incest was the price of parricide!
Zaph. Strike your assassins——
Alc. I embrace my children,
And joy to see them, though my life's the forfeit!
Rise, children, rise, and live: live to revenge
Your father's death.—But, in the name of nature,
By the remains of this paternal blood,
That's oozing from my wound, raise not your hands
'Gainst your own being. Zaphna, wouldst thou do me
A second deadlier mischief?
Self-slaughter cannot atone for parricide.
Zaph. Then I will live,
Live to some purpose: This is glorious suffering.
Alc. Thy undetermined arm has not quite fulfilled
Its bigot purpose; I hope to live to animate
Our friends 'gainst this impostor: Lead them, Zaphna,
To root out a rapacious baneful crew,
Whose zeal is frenzy, whose religion murder!
Zaph. Swift, swift, ye hours! and light me to revenge!
Come, thou infernal weapon,
[*Snatches the bloody sword.*
I'll wash off thy foul stain with the heart's blood
Of that malignant sanctified assassin!
[*As Zaphna is going off, Mirvan and his followers enter, and stop him.*
Mir. Seize Zaphna,
And load the traiterous murderer with chains!
Help you the good Alcanor—Hapless man!
Our prophet, in a vision, learnt to-night
The mournful tale of thy untimely end,
And sent me straight to seize the vile assassin,
That he might wreak severest justice on him:
Mahomet comes to vindicate the laws,
Not suffer, with impunity, their breach.
Alc. Heavens! what accumulated crimes are here!
Zaph. Where is the monster? bear me instant to him,
That I may blast him with my eye, may curse him
With my last hesitating voice!
Pal. Thou traitor!
Did not thy own death-doing tongue enjoin
This horrid deed?
Mir. Not mine, by Heaven!
Zaph. Not thine!
Mir. No; by our prophet, and his holy faith,
Of all the thoughts ere harboured in this breast,
It ne'er had such a monster for its tenant!
Zaph. Most accomplished villain!
Mirvan, look at me—darest thou——
Mir. Off with him, [*To the Soldiers.*
And see him well secured, till Mahomet
Demands him of you.
Pal. Villain, hold! [*Laying hold of Zaphna.*
Mir. Away!
Zaph. Just, just reward of my credulity!
Pal. Let me go with him; I will share thy fate,
Unhappy Zaphna, for I share thy guilt——
But then—— [*Looking back at Alcanor.*
Mir. No more—you must to Mahomet:
Obey without reluctance: Our great prophet,
In pity to your tender frame and years,
Will take you under his divine protection.
Pal. [*Aside.*] Oh death! deliver me from such protection!
Mir. If you would aught to save the destined Zaphna,
Follow me to the prophet; you may move him
To mitigate his doom.—Away!
[*To the soldiers who hold Zaphna.*
You this way. [*To Palmira.*
Zaph. Pardon!

Pal. Oh, pardon!
[*They are led off by degrees, looking alternately at their father and each other.*
Alc. Oh, insupportable!
Both from me torn, then, when I wanted most
Their consolation. [*A shout.*
Pha. Hark!
The citizens are roused, and all, in arms,
Rush on to your defence.
Alc. Pharon, support me
Some moments longer.—Help, conduct me towards them;
Bare this wound to them; let that speak the cause,
The treacherous cause—for words begin to fail me;
Then, if in death I can but serve my country,
Save my poor children from this tiger's gripe,
And give a second life to that loved pair,
By whose misguided zeal I lose my own——
What patriot, or parent, but would wish,
In so divine a cause, to fall a martyr!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter MAHOMET *and* MIRVAN.

Mah. WRONG will be ever nursed and fed with blood!——
So this boy bigot held his pious purpose?
Mir. Devoutly.
Mah. What a senseless machine
Can superstition make the reasoner man!
Alcanor lies there on his bed of earth?
Mir. This moment he expired, and Mecca's youth
In vain lament their chief. To the mad crowd
That gathered round, good Ali and myself
(Full of thy dauntless heavenly-seeming spirit)
Disclaimed the deed, and pointed out the arm
Of righteous Heaven, that strikes for Mahomet.
Think ye, we cried (with eyes and hands upreared),
Think ye our holy prophet would consent
To such a crime, whose foulness casts a blot
On right of nations, nature, and our faith?
Oh, rather think he will revenge his death,
And root his murder from the burdened earth!
Then struck our breasts, and wept the good old man,
And only wished he'd died among the faithful,
And slept with Ibrahim.
Mah. Excellent Mirvan!
Mir. We, then, both at large
Descanted on thy clemency and bounty.
On that the silent and desponding crowd
Broke out in murmurs, plaints, and last in shouts,
And each mechanic grew a mussulman.
Mah. Oh, worthy to deceive and awe the world,
Second to Mahomet! let me embrace thee——
But say, is not our army at their gates
To back our clemency?
Mir. Omar commands
Their nightly march through unsuspected paths,
And with the morn appears.
Mah. At sight of them,
The weak remaining billows of this storm
Will lash themselves to peace—But where is Zaphna?
Mir. Safe in a dungeon, where he dies apace.
Ere at the altar's foot he slew his sire,
In his own veins he bore his guilt's reward,
A deadly draught of poison.
Mah. I would be kind, and let him die deceived,
Nor know that parent-blood defiles his soul.
Mir. He cannot know it: if the grave be silent,
I'm sure Hercides is——
Mah. Unhappy Zaphna!
Something like pity checks me for thy death.
But why—I must not think that way—shall Mahomet
Give a new paradise to all mankind,
And let remorse of conscience be the hell
Of his own breast! My safety claimed his life,
And all the heaven of fair Palmira's charms
Shall be my great reward.
Mir. My noble lord,
Palmira is at hand, and waits your pleasure.
Mah. At hand! How, Mirvan, couldst thou let me talk
On themes of guilt, when that pure angel's near?
Mir. The weeping fair, led on by flattering hope
Of Zaphna's life, attends your sacred will:
A silent pale dejection shrouds her cheeks,
And, like the lily in a morning shower,
She droops her head and locks up all her sweets.
Mah. Say Mahomet awaits, and then
Assemble all our chiefs, and on this platform
Let them attend me straight. [*Exit Mirvan.*

Enter PALMIRA *with attendants.*

Pal. apart.] Where have they led me?
Methinks each step I take, the mangled corse
Of my dear father (by poor Zaphna mangled)
Lies in my way, and all I see is blood—[*Starting.*
'Tis the impostor's self!—Burst, heart, in silence.
Mah. Maid, lay aside this dread. Palmira's fate
And that of Mecca by my will is fixed.
This great event, that fills thy soul with horror,
Is mystery to all but Heaven and Mahomet.
Pal. Oh, ever righteous Heaven! canst thou suffer

This sacrilegious hypocrite, this spoiler,
To steal thy terrors, and blaspheme thy name,
Nor doom him instant dead? [*Aside.*
Mah. Child of my care,
At length from galling chains I've set thee free,
And made thee triumph in a just revenge;
Think then thou'rt dear to me, and Mahomet
Regards thee with a more than father's eye;
Then know (if thou'lt deserve the mighty boon)
An higher name, a nobler fate, awaits thee.
Pal. What would the tyrant?— [*Aside.*
Mah. Raise thy thoughts to glory,
And sweep this Zaphna from thy memory,
With all that's past—Let that mean flame expire
Before the blaze of empire's radiant sun.
Thy grateful heart must answer to my bounties,
Follow my laws, and share in all my conquests.
Pal. What laws, what bounties, and what conquests, tyrant?
Fraud is thy law, the tomb thy only bounty,
Thy conquests fatal as infected air,
Dispeopling half the globe—See here, good Heaven!
The venerable prophet I revered,
The king I served, the god that I adored!
Mah. approaching her.] Whence this unwonted language, this wild frenzy?
Pal. Where is the spirit of my martyred father?
Where Zaphna's, where Palmira's innocence?
Blasted by thee, by thee, infernal monster—
Thou found'st us angels and hast made us fiends;
Give, give us back our lives, our fame, our virtue:
Thou canst not, tyrant—yet thou seekest my love,
Seekest with Alcanor's blood his daughter's love!
Mah. apart.] Horror and death! the fatal secret's known.

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Oh, Mahomet, all's lost, thy glory tarnished,
And the insatiate tomb ripe to devour us!
Hercides' parting breath divulged the secret.
The prison's forced, the city all in arms:
See where they bear aloft their murdered chief,
Fell Zaphna in their front, death in his looks,
Rage all his strength. Spite of the deadly draught,
He holds in life but to make sure of vengeance.
Mah. What dost thou here, then? instant with our guards,
Attempt to stem their progress, till the arrival
Of Omar with the troops.
Mir. I haste, my lord. [*Exit Mirvan.*
Pal. Now, now, my hour's at hand!
Hearest thou those shouts, that rend the ambient air?
Seest thou those glancing fires, that add new horrors
To the night's gloom? fresh from thy murdering poignard,
My father's spirit leads the vengeful shades
Of all the wretches whom thy sword has butchered:
I see them raise their unsubstantial arms
To snatch me from thy rage, or worse, thy love.
Shadows shall conquer in Palmira's cause.
Mah. [*Aside.*] What terror's this, that hangs upon her accents?
I feel her virtue, though I know her weakness.
Pal. Thou askest my love; go seek it in the grave
Of good Alcanor. Talk'st of grateful minds?
Bid Zaphna plead for thee, and I may hear thee;
Till then, thou art my scorn—May'st thou, like me,
Behold thy dearest blood spilt at thy feet!
Mecca, Medina, all our Asian world,
Join, join to drive the impostor from the earth!
Blush at his chains, and shake them off in vengeance!
Mah. [*Aside.*] Be still, my soul, nor let a woman's rage
Ruffle thy wonted calm. Spite of thy hate,
Thou art lovely still, and charming even in madness.
[*A shout and noise of fighting.*
My fair, retire; nor let thy gentle soul
Shake with alarms; thou art my peculiar care:
I go to quell this traitorous insurrection,
And will attend thee straight.
Pal. No, tyrant, no;
I'll join my brother, help to head our friends,
And urge them on. [*A shout.*
Roll, roll your thunders, heavens, and aid the storm!
Now hurl your lightning on the guilty head,
And plead the cause of injured innocence!
[*Exit Pal.*

Enter ALI.

Mah. Whence, Ali, that surprise?
Ali. My royal chief,
The foe prevails. Thy troops, led on by Mirvan,
Are all cut off, and valiant Mirvan's self,
By Zaphna slain, lies weltering in his blood:
The guard, that to our arms should ope the gates,
Struck with the common phrenzy, vow thy ruin,
And death and vengeance is the general cry!
Mah. Can Ali fear? then, Mahomet, be thyself!
Ali. See, thy few friends, whom wild despair hath armed,
(But armed in vain) are come to die beside thee.
Mah. Ye heartless traitors! Mahomet alone
Shall be his own defender, and your guard
Against the crowds of Mecca—Follow me.
Ha!

Enter ZAPHNA, PALMIRA, *and* PHARON, *with citizens, and the body of* ALCANOR *on a bier.*

Zaph. See, my friends, where the Impostor stands,

With head erect, as if he knew not guilt,
As if no tongue spake from Alcanor's wounds,
Nor called for vengeance on him.
Mah. Impious man!
Is it not enough to have spilt thy parent-blood,
But, with atrocious and blaspheming lips,
Darest thou arraign the substitute of Heaven!
Zaph. The substitute of Heaven! so is the sword,
The pestilence, the famine; such art thou;
Such are the blessings Heaven has sent to man
By thee its delegate; nay, more, to me.
Oh, he took pains, Palmira, upon us;
Deluded us into such monstrous crimes
As Nature sickened at conception of!——
How couldst thou damn us thus?
Mah. Babbler, avaunt!
Zaph. Well thou upbraid'st me; for to parley with thee
Half brands me coward. Oh, revenge me, friends!
Revenge Alcanor's massacre; revenge
Palmira's wrongs, and crush the rancorous monster!
Mah. Hear me, ye slaves, born to obey my will!
Pal. Ah, hear him not! fraud dwells upon his tongue.
Zaph. Have at thee, fiend—Ha! Heaven!
[*Zaphna advancing, reels, and reclines on his sword.*
What cloud is this
That thwarts upon my sight? My head grows dizzy,
My joints unloose; sure 'tis the stroke of Fate.
Mah. [*Aside.*] The poison works! then triumph, Mahomet!
Zaph. Off, off, base lethargy!
Pal. Brother, dismayed!
Hast thou not power but in a guilty cause,
And only strength to be a parricide?
Zaph. Spare that reproach—Come on—It will not be.
[*Hangs down his sword, and reclines on Pharon.*
Some cruel power unnerves my willing arm,
Blasts my resolves, and weighs me down to earth.
Mah. Such be the fate of all, who brave our law.
Nature and Death have heard my voice, and now
Let Heaven be judge 'twixt Zaphna and myself,
And instant blast the guilty of the two.
Pal. Brother! oh, Zaphna!
Zaph. Zaphna, now no more.
[*Sinking down by Alcanor's body, and leaning on the bier, Pharon kneeling down with him, and supporting him.*
Down, down, good Pharon—Thou poor injured corse,
May I embrace thee? Wont thy pallid wound
Purple anew at the unnatural touch,
And ooze fresh calls for vengeance?
Pal. Oh, my brother!
Zaph. In vain's the guiltless meaning of my heart;
High heaven detests the involuntary crime,
And dooms for parricide—Then tremble, tyrant!
If the Supreme can punish errors thus,
What new-invented tortures must await
Thy soul, grown leprous with such foul offences?
But soft—now Fate and Nature are at strife—
Sister, farewell! with transport should I quit
This toilsome, perilous, delusive stage,
But that I leave thee on it: leave thee, Palmira,
Exposed to what is worse than fear can image,
That tyrant's mercy; but I know thee brave;
Know that thou'lt act a part—Look on her Heaven,
Guide her, and—oh! [*Dies.*
Pal. Think not, ye men of Mecca,
This death inflicted by the hand of heaven;
'Tis he—that viper——
Mah. Know, ye faithless wretches!
'Tis mine to deal the bolts of angry heaven;
Behold them there, and let the wretch, who doubts,
Tremble at Zaphna's fate; and know, that Mahomet
Can read his thoughts, and doom him with a look.
Go then, and thank your pontiff and your prince
For each day's sun he grants you to behold.
Hence to your temples, and appease my rage!
[*The people go off.*
Pal. Ah, stay! my brother's murdered by this tyrant:
By poison, not by picty, he kills.
Mah. 'Tis done——Thus ever be our law received! [*Apart.*
Now, fair Palmira——
Pal. Monster! is it thus,
Thou makest thyself a god, by added crimes,
And murders justified by sacrilege?
Mah. Think, exquisite Palmira! for thy sake—
Pal. Thou'st been the murderer of all my race.
See where Alcanor, see where Zaphna, lies;
Do they not call for me too at thy hands?
Oh that they did!—But I can read thy thoughts;
Palmira's saved for something worse than death;
This to prevent——Zaphna, I follow thee.
[*Stabs herself with Zaphna's sword.*
Mah. What hast thou done!
Pal. A deed of glory, tyrant!
Thou hast left no object worth Palmira's eyes,
And, when I shut out light, I shut out thee——
[*Dies.*
Mah. Farewell, dear victim of my boundless passion!
The price of treachery, the reward of murder,
Sink with thee to the earth——Oh, justice, justice!
In vain are glory, worship, and dominion!
All conqueror as I am, I am a slave,
And, by the world adored, dwell with the damned!

My crimes have planted scorpions in my breast;
Here, here, I feel them. 'Tis in vain to brave
The host of terrors, that invade my soul:
I might deceive the world, myself I cannot.
Ali. Be calm a while, my lord; think what you are.
Mah. Ha! what am I? [*Turning to the bodies.*
Ye breathless family,
Let your loud crying wounds say what I am.
Oh! snatch me from that sight; quick, quick transport me
To nature's loneliest mansion, where the sun
Ne'er entered, where the sound of human tread
Was never heard—But wherefore? still I there,
There still, shall find myself—Ay, that's the hell!
I'll none on't. [*Drawing his sword.*
Ali. Heavens! help, hold him!
[*Ali, &c. disarm him.*
Mah. Paltry dastards!
You fled the foe, but can disarm your master!
Angel of death, whose power I've long proclaimed,
Now aid me, if thou canst; now, if thou canst,
Draw the kind curtain of eternal night,
And shroud me from the horrors, that beset me!
[*Exeunt Mahomet, &c.*
Pha. Oh! what a curse is life, when self-conviction
Flings our offences hourly in our face,
And turns existence torturer to itself!
Here let the mad enthusiast turn his eyes,
And see from bigotry what horrors rise;
Here in the blackest colours let him read,
That zeal, by craft misled, may act a deed,
By which both innocence and virtue bleed.
]*Exeunt omnes.*

TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA.

BY

THOMSON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

TANCRED, *count of Leece.*
MATTEO SIFFREDI, *lord high chancellor of Sicily.*
EARL OSMOND, *lord high constable of Sicily.*
RODOLPHO, *friend to Tancred, and captain of the guards.*

WOMEN.

SIGISMUNDA, *daughter of Siffredi.*
LAURA, *sister of Rodolpho, and friend to Sigismunda.*

Barons, Officers, Guards, &c.

Scene—The city of Palermo, in Italy.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The palace.*

Enter SIGISMUNDA *and* LAURA.

Sig. AH, fatal day to Sicily! the king
Touches his last moments!
Laura. So 'tis feared.
Sig. The death of those distinguished by their station,
But by their virtue more, awakes the mind
To solemn dread, and strikes a saddening awe;
Not that we grieve for them, but for ourselves,
Left to the toil of life—And yet the best
Are, by the playful children of this world,
At once forgot, as they had never been.
Laura, 'tis said, the heart is sometimes charged
With a prophetic sadness: such, methinks,
Now hangs on mine. The king's approaching death
Suggests a thousand fears. What troubles thence
May throw the state once more into confusion,
What sudden changes in my father's house
May rise, and part me from my dearest Tancred,
Alarms my thoughts.
Laura. The fears of love-sick fancy!
Perversely busy to torment itself.
But be assured, your father's steady friendship,
Joined to a certain genius, that commands,
Not kneels to fortune, will support and cherish,
Here, in the public eye of Sicily,
This, I may call him, his adopted son,
The noble Tancred, formed to all his virtues.
Sig. Ah, formed to charm his daughter!—This fair morn
Has tempted far the chase. Is he not yet
Returned?
Laura. No. When your father to the king,
Who now expiring lies, was called in haste,
He sent each way his messengers to find him;
With such a look of ardour and impatience,
As if this near event was to count Tancred
Of more importance than I comprehend.
Sig. There lies, my Laura, o'er my Tancred's birth
A cloud I cannot pierce. With princely accost,
Nay, with respect, which oft I have observed,
Stealing, at times, submissive o'er his features,
In Belmont's woods my father reared this youth—
Ah, woods! where first my artless bosom learned
The sighs of love.—He gives him out the son
Of an old friend, a baron of Apulia,

Who, in the late crusado, bravely fell.
But then 'tis strange; is all his family
As well as father dead? and all their friends,
Except my sire, the generous good Siffredi?
Had he a mother, sister, brother, left,
The last remain of kindred, with what pride,
What rapture, might they fly o'er earth and sea,
To claim this rising honour of their blood!
This bright unknown, this all-accomplished youth,
Who charms too much the heart of Sigismunda!
Laura, perhaps your brother knows him better,
The friend and partner of his freest hours.
What says Rodolpho? Does he truly credit
This story of his birth?

Laura. He has sometimes,
Like you, his doubts; yet, when maturely weighed,
Believes it true. As for lord Tancred's self,
He never entertained the slightest thought
That verged to doubt; but oft laments his state,
By cruel fortune so ill paired to yours.

Sig. Merit like his, the fortune of the mind,
Beggars all wealth—Then, to your brother, Laura,
He talks of me?

Laura. Of nothing else. Howe'er
The talk begin, it ends with Sigismunda.
Their morning, noontide, and their evening walks,
Are full of you, and all the woods of Belmont
Enamoured with your name———

Sig. Away, my friend;
You flatter——yet the dear delusion charms.

Laura. No, Sigismunda, 'tis the strictest truth,
Nor half the truth, I tell you. Even with fondness
My brother talks for ever of the passion
That fires young Tancred's breast. So much it strikes him,
He praises love as if he were a lover.
He blames the false pursuits of vagrant youth,
Calls them gay folly, a mistaken struggle
Against best judging nature. Heaven, he says,
In lavish bounty formed the heart for love;
In love included all the finer seeds
Of honour, virtue, friendship, purest bliss——

Sig. Virtuous Rodolpho!

Laura. Then his pleasing theme
He varies to the praises of your lover——

Sig. And, what, my Laura, says he on the subject?

Laura. He says, that, though he was not nobly born,
Nature has formed him noble, generous, brave,
Truly magnanimous, and warmly scorning
Whatever bears the smallest taint of baseness;
That every easy virtue is his own;
Not learned by painful labour, but inspired,
Implanted in his soul. Chiefly one charm
He in his graceful character observes;
That though his passions burn with high impatience,
And sometimes, from a noble heat of nature,
Are ready to fly off; yet the least check
Of ruling reason brings them back to temper,
And gentle softness.

Sig. True! Oh, true, Rodolpho!
Blest be thy kindred worth for loving his!
He is all warmth, all amiable fire,
All quick heroic ardour! tempered soft
With gentleness of heart, and manly reason!
If virtue were to wear a human form,
To light it with her dignity and flame,
Then softening, mix her smiles and tender graces—
Oh, she would choose the person of my Tancred!
Go on, my friend, go on, and ever praise him;
The subject knows no bounds, nor can I tire,
While my breast trembles to that sweetest music!
The heart of woman tastes no truer joy,
Is never flattered with such dear enchantment—
'Tis more than selfish vanity—as when
She hears the praises of the man she loves!

Laura. Madam, your father comes.

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. [*To an attendant as he enters.*] Lord Tancred
Is found?

Atten. My lord, he quickly will be here.
I scarce could keep before him, though he bid me
Speed on, to say he would attend your orders.

Sif. 'Tis well—retire—You too, my daughter, leave me.

Sig. I go, my father—But how fares the king?

Sif. He is no more. Gone to that awful state,
Where kings the crown wear only of their virtues.

Sig. How bright must then be his!—This stroke is sudden;
He was this morning well, when to the chase
Lord Tancred went.

Sif. 'Tis true. But at his years
Death gives short notice—Drooping nature then,
Without a gust of pain to shake it, falls.
His death, my daughter, was that happy period
Which few attain. The duties of his day
Were all discharged, and gratefully enjoyed
Its noblest blessings; calm as evening skies
Was his pure mind, and lighted up with hopes
That open heaven; when, for his last long sleep
Timely prepared, a lassitude of life,
A pleasing weariness of mortal joy,
Fell on his soul, and down he sunk to rest.
Oh, may my death be such!—He but one wish
Left unfulfilled, which was to see count Tancred—

Sig. To see count Tancred!—Pardon me, my lord—

Sif. For what, my daughter?—But, with such emotion,
Why did you start at mention of count Tancred?

Sig. Nothing—I only hoped the dying king
Might mean to make some generous just provision
For this your worthy charge, this noble orphan.

Sif. And he has done it largely—Leave me now—

I want some private conference with lord Tancred. [*Exeunt Sigismunda and Laura.*
My doubts are but too true—If these old eyes
Can trace the marks of love, a mutual passion
Has seized, I fear, my daughter and this prince,
My sovereign now—Should it be so? Ah, there,
There lurks a brooding tempest, that may shake
My long concerted scheme, to settle firm
The public peace and welfare, which the king
Has made the prudent basis of his will——
Away, unworthy views! you shall not tempt me!
Nor interest, nor ambition shall seduce
My fixed resolve—Perish the selfish thought,
Which our own good prefers to that of millions!
He comes, my king, unconscious of his fortune.

Enter TANCRED.

Tan. My lord Siffredi, in your looks I read,
Confirmed, the mournful news that fly abroad
From tongue to tongue—We then, at last, have lost
The good old king?
Sif. Yes, we have lost a father!
The greatest blessing heaven bestows on mortals,
And seldom found amidst these wilds of time,
A good, a worthy king!—Hear me, my Tancred,
And I will tell thee, in a few plain words,
How he deserved that best, that glorious title.
'Tis nought complex, 'tis clear as truth and virtue.
He loved his people, deemed them all his children;
The good exalted, and depressed the bad.
He spurned the flattering crew, with scorn rejected
Their smooth advice that only means themselves,
Their schemes to aggrandize him into baseness;
Nor did he less disdain the secret breath,
The whispered tale, that blights a virtuous name.
He sought alone the good of those for whom
He was entrusted with the sovereign power:
Well knowing, that a people, in their rights
And industry protected; living safe
Beneath the sacred shelter of the laws;
Encouraged in their genius, arts and labours,
And happy each, as he himself deserves,
Are ne'er ungrateful. With unsparing hand,
They will for him provide: their filial love
And confidence are his unfailing treasure,
And every honest man his faithful guard.
Tan. A general face of grief o'erspreads the city.
I marked the people, as I hither came,
In crowds assembled, struck with silent sorrow,
And pouring forth the noblest praise—of tears.
Those, whom remembrance of their former woes,
And long experience of the vain illusions
Of youthful hope, had into wise consent
And fear of change corrected, wrung their hands,
And, often casting up their eyes to heaven,
Gave sign of sad conjecture. Others shewed,
Athwart their grief, or real or affected,
A gleam of expectation, from what chance
And change might bring. A mingled murmur ran
Along the streets; and from the lonely court
Of him, who can no more assist their fortunes,
I saw the courtier-fry, with eager haste,
All hurrying to Constantia.
Sif. Noble youth!
I joy to hear from thee these just reflections,
Worthy of riper years—But if they seek
Constantia, trust me, they mistake their course.
Tan. How! Is she not, my lord, the late king's sister,
Heir to the crown of Sicily? the last
Of our famed Norman line, and now our queen?
Sif. Tancred, 'tis true; she is the late king's sister,
The sole surviving offspring of that tyrant
William the Bad—so for his vices stiled;
Who spilt much noble blood, and sore oppressed
The exhausted land: whence grievous wars arose,
And many a dire convulsion shook the state;
When he, whose death Sicilia mourns to-day,
William, who has, and well deserved the name
Of Good, succeeding to his father's throne,
Relieved his country's woes—But to return;
She is the late king's sister, born some months
After the tyrant's death, but not next heir.
Tan. You much surprise me—May I then presume
To ask who is?
Sif. Come nearer, noble Tancred,
Son of my care. I must, on this occasion,
Consult thy generous heart; which, when conducted
By rectitude of mind and honest virtues,
Gives better counsel than the hoary head—
Then know, there lives a prince, here in Palermo,
The lineal offspring of our famous hero,
Roger the First.
Tan. Great Heaven! How far removed
From that our mighty founder?
Sif. His great grandson:
Sprung from his eldest son, who died untimely,
Before his father.
Tan. Ha! the prince you mean,
Is he not Manfred's son? The generous, brave,
Unhappy Manfred? whom the tyrant William,
You just now mentioned, not content to spoil
Of his paternal crown, threw into fetters,
And infamously murdered?
Sif. Yes, the same.
Tan. By heavens, I joy to find our Norman reign,
The world's sole light amidst these barbarous ages,
Yet rears its head; and shall not, from the lance,
Pass to the feeble distaff.—But this prince,
Where has he lain concealed?
Sif. The late good king,
By noble pity moved, contrived to save him
From his dire father's unrelenting rage,
And had him reared in private, as became

His birth and hopes, with high and princely nurture.
Till now, too young to rule a troubled state,
By civil broils most miserably torn,
He, in his safe retreat, has lain concealed,
His birth and fortune to himself unknown;
But when the dying king to me intrusted,
As to the chancellor of the realm, his will,
His successor he named him.
Tan. Happy youth!
He then will triumph o'er his father's foes,
O'er haughty Osmond, and the tyrant's daughter.
Sif. Ay, that is what I dread—the heat of youth;
There lurks, I fear, perdition to the state;
I dread the horrors of rekindled war:
Though dead, the tyrant still is to be feared;
His daughter's party still is strong and numerous:
Her friend, earl Osmond, constable of Sicily,
Experienced, brave, high-born, of mighty interest.
Better the prince and princess should by marriage
Unite their friends, their interest, and their claims;
Then will the peace and welfare of the land
On a firm basis rise.
Tan. My lord Siffredi,
If by myself I of this prince may judge,
That scheme will scarce succeed—Your prudent age
In vain will counsel, if the heart forbid it—
But wherefore fear? The right is clearly his;
And, under your direction, with each man
Of worth, and stedfast loyalty, to back
At once the king's appointment and his birthright,
There is no ground for fear. They have great odds,
Against the astonished sons of violence,
Who fight with awful justice on their side.
All Sicily will rouse, all faithful hearts
Will range themselves around prince Manfred's son.
For me, I here devote me to the service
Of this young prince; I every drop of blood
Will lose with joy, with transport, in his cause—
Pardon my warmth—but that, my lord, will never
To this decision come—Then find the prince;
Lose not a moment to awaken in him
The royal soul. Perhaps he now, desponding,
Pines in a corner, and laments his fortune,
That in the narrower bounds of private life
He must confine his aims, those swelling virtues
Which from his noble father he inherits.
Sif. Perhaps, regardless, in the common bane
Of youth he melts, in vanity and love.
But if the seeds of virtue glow within him,
I will awake a higher sense, a love,
That grasps the loves and happiness of millions.
Tan. Why that surmise? Or should he love, Siffredi,
I doubt not, it is nobly, which will raise
And animate his virtues—Oh, permit me
To plead the cause of youth—Their virtue oft,
In pleasure's soft enchantment lulled awhile,
Forgets itself; it sleeps and gayly dreams,
Till great occasion rouse it; then, all flame,
It walks abroad, with heightened soul and vigour,
And by the change astonishes the world!
Even with a kind of sympathy, I feel
The joy that waits this prince; when all the powers,
The expanding heart can wish, of doing good;
Whatever swells ambition, or exalts
The human soul into divine emotions,
All crowd at once upon him.
Sif. Ah, my Tancred,
Nothing so easy as in speculation,
And at a distance seen, the course of honour;
A fair delightful champaign strewed with flowers.
But when the practice comes; when our fond passions,
Pleasure and pride, and self-indulgence, throw
Their magic dust around, the prospect roughens;
Then dreadful passes, craggy mountains rise,
Cliffs to be scaled, and torrents to be stemmed;
Then toil ensues, and perseverance stern;
And endless combats with our grosser sense,
Oft lost, and oft renewed; and generous pain
For others felt; and, harder lesson still!
Our honest bliss for others sacrificed;
And all the rugged task of virtue quells
The stoutest heart of common resolution.
Few get above this turbid scene of strife,
Few gain the summit, breathe that purest air,
That heavenly ether, which untroubled sees
The storm of vice and passion rage below.
Tan. Most true, my lord. But why thus augur ill?
You seem to doubt this prince. I know him not;
Yet, oh, methinks, my heart could answer for him!
The juncture is so high, so strong the gale
That blows from Heaven, as through the deadest soul
Might breathe the godlike energy of virtue.
Sif. Hear him, immortal shades of his great fathers!—
Forgive me, sir, this trial of your heart.
Thou! thou, art he!
Tan. Siffredi!
Sif. Tancred, thou!
Thou art the man of all the many thousands
That toil upon the bosom of this isle,
By Heaven elected to command the rest,
To rule, protect them, and to make them happy!
Tan. Manfred my father! I the last support
Of the famed Norman line, that awes the world!
I, who this morning wandered forth an orphan,
Outcast of all but thee, my second father!
Thus called to glory! to the first great lot
Of human kind!—Oh, wonder-working hand,
That in majestic silence, sways at will
The mighty movements of unbounded nature!
Oh, grant me, Heaven, the virtues to sustain

This awful burden of so many heroes!
Let me not be exalted into shame,
Set up the worthless pageant of vain grandeur!
Meantime I thank the justice of the king,
Who has my right bequeathed me. Thee, Siffredi,
I thank thee—Oh, I ne'er enough can thank thee!
Yes, thou hast been—thou art—shalt be my father!
Thou shalt direct my inexperienced years,
Shalt be the ruling head, and I the hand.
Sif. It is enough—for me—to see my sovereign
Assert his virtues, and maintain his honour.
Tan. I think, my lord, you said the king committed
To you his will. I hope it is not clogged
With any base conditions, any clause,
To tyrannize my heart, and to Constantia
Enslave my hand, devoted to another.
The hint you just now gave of that alliance,
You must imagine, wakes my fear. But know,
In this alone I will not bear dispute,
Not even from thee, Siffredi!—Let the council
Be strait assembled, and the will there opened:
Thence issue speedy orders to convene,
This day ere noon, the senate: where those barons,
Who now are in Palermo, will attend,
To pay their ready homage to their king,
Their rightful king, who claims his native crown,
And will not be a king by deeds and parchments.
Sif. I go, my liege. But once again permit me
To tell you——Now, is the trying crisis,
That must determine of your future reign.
Oh, with heroic rigour watch your heart!
And to the sovereign duties of the king,
The unequalled pleasures of a god on earth,
Submit the common joys, the common passions,
Nay, even the virtues, of the private man,
Tan. Of that no more. They not oppose, but aid,
Invigorate, cherish, and reward each other.
The kind all-ruling wisdom is no tyrant.
[*Exit Siffredi.*
Tan. Now, generous Sigismunda, comes my turn
To shew my love was not of thine unworthy,
When fortune bade me blush to look on thee.
But what is fortune to the wish of love?
A miserable bankrupt! Oh, 'tis poor,
'Tis scanty all, whate'er we can bestow!
The wealth of kings is wretchedness and want!
Quick, let me find her! taste that highest joy,
The exalted heart can know, the mixed effusion
Of gratitude and love! Behold, she comes!

Enter SIGISMUNDA.

Tan. My fluttering soul was all on wing to find thee,
My love, my Sigismunda!
Sif. Oh, my Tancred!
Tell me, what means this mystery and gloom
That lowers around? Just now, involved in thought,
My father shot athwart me—You, my lord,
Seem strangely moved—I fear some dark event,
From the king's death, to trouble our repose,
That tender calm we in the woods of Belmont
So happily enjoyed——Explain this hurry;
What means it? Say.
Tan. It means that we are happy!
Beyond our most romantic wishes happy!
Sig. You but perplex me more.
Tan. It means, my fairest,
That thou art queen of Sicily; and I
The happiest of mankind! than monarch more!
Because with thee I can adorn my throne.
Manfred, who fell by tyrant William's rage,
Famed Roger's lineal issue, was my father.
[*Pausing.*
You droop, my love; dejected on a sudden,
You seem to mourn my fortune—The soft tear
Springs in thy eye—Oh, let me kiss it off—
Why this, my Sigismunda?
Sig. Royal Tancred,
None at your glorious fortune can like me
Rejoice; yet me alone, of all Sicilians,
It makes unhappy.
Tan. I should hate it, then!
Should throw, with scorn, the splendid ruin from me!
No, Sigismunda, 'tis my hope with thee
To share it, whence it draws its richest value.
Sig. You are my sovereign—I at humble distance—
Tan. Thou art my queen! the sovereign of my soul!
You never reigned with such triumphant lustre,
Such winning charms, as now; yet, thou art still
The dear, the tender, generous Sigismunda!
Who, with a heart exalted far above
Those selfish views that charm the common breast,
Stooped from the height of life and courted beauty,
Then, then, to love me, when I seemed of fortune
The hopeless outcast, when I had no friend,
None to protect and own me, but thy father.
And wouldst thou claim all goodness to thyself?
Canst thou thy Tancred deem so dully formed,
Of such gross clay, just as I reached the point—
A point my wildest hopes could ne'er imagine—
In that great moment, full of every virtue,
That I should then so mean a traitor prove
To the best bliss and honour of mankind,
So much disgrace the human heart, as then,
For the dead form of flattery and pomp,
The faithless joys of courts, to quit kind truth,
The cordial sweets of friendship and of love,
The life of life! my all, my Sigismunda!
I could upbraid thy fears, call them unkind,
Cruel, unjust, an outrage to my heart,
Did they not spring from love.
Sig. Think not, my lord,

That to such vulgar doubts I can descend.
Your heart, I know, disdains the little thought
Of changing with the vain, external change
Of circumstance and fortune. Rather thence
It would, with rising ardour, greatly feel
A noble pride, to shew itself the same.
But, ah! the hearts of kings are not their own.
There is a haughty duty, that subjects them
To chains of state, to wed the public welfare,
And not indulge the tender, private virtues.
Some high-descended princess, who will bring
New power and interest to your throne, demands
Your royal hand—perhaps Constantia——
Tan. She!
Oh, name her not! were I this moment free
And disengaged as he, who never felt
The powerful eye of beauty, never sighed
For matchless worth like thine, I should abhor
All thoughts of that alliance. Her fell father
Most basely murdered mine; and she, his daughter,
Supported by his barbarous party still,
His pride inherits, his imperious spirit,
And insolent pretensions to my throne.
And canst thou deem me, then, so poorly tame,
So cool a traitor to my father's blood,
As from the prudent cowardice of state
E'er to submit to such a base proposal?
Detested thought! Oh, doubly, doubly hateful!
From the two strongest passions; from aversion
To this Constantia—and from love to thee.
Custom, 'tis true, a venerable tyrant,
O'er servile man extends a blind dominion:
The pride of kings enslaves them; their ambition,
Or interest, lords it o'er the better passions.
But vain their talk, masked under specious words
Of station, duty, and of public good.
They, whom just Heaven has to a throne exalted,
To guard the rights and liberties of others,
What duty binds them to betray their own?
For me, my free-born heart shall bear no dictates,
But those of truth and honour; wear no chains,
But the dear chains of love, and Sigismunda!
Or if indeed, my choice must be directed
By views of public good, whom shall I choose
So fit to grace, to dignify a crown,
And beam sweet mercy on a happy people,
As thee, my love? Whom place upon my throne
But thee, descended from the good Siffredi?
'Tis fit that heart be thine, which drew from him
Whate'er can make it worthy thy acceptance.
Sig. Cease, cease to raise my hopes above my duty!
Charm me no more, my Tancred! Oh, that we
In those blest woods, where first you won my soul,
Had passed our gentle days, far from the toil
And pomp of courts! Such is the wish of love;
Of love that, with delightful weakness, knows
No bliss, and no ambition but itself.
But in the world's full light, those charming dreams,
Those fond illusions vanish. Awful duties,
The tyranny of men, even your own heart,
Where lurks a sense your passion stifles now,
And proud imperious honour, call you from me.
'Tis all in vain—you cannot hush a voice
That murmurs here—I must not be persuaded!
Tan. [*kneeling.*] Hear me, thou soul of all my hopes and wishes!
And witness Heaven, prime source of love and joy!
Not a whole warring world combined against me,
Its pride, its splendour, its imposing forms,
Nor interest, nor ambition, nor the face
Of solemn state, nor even thy father's wisdom,
Shall ever shake my faith to Sigismunda!
[*Trumpets and acclamations heard.*
But, hark! the public voice to duties calls me,
Which, with unwearied zeal, I will discharge;
And thou, yes, thou, shalt be my bright reward;
Yet—ere I go—to hush thy lovely fears,
Thy delicate objections—[*Writes his name.*]——
Take this blank,
Signed with my name, and give it to thy father:
Tell him, 'tis my command, it be filled up
With a most strict and solemn marriage-contract.
How dear each tie, how charming to my soul,
That more unites me to my Sigismunda!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT. II.

SCENE I.—*A grand Saloon.*

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. So far 'tis well——The late king's will proceeds
Upon the plan I counselled; that prince Tancred
Shall make Constantia partner of his throne.
Oh, great, oh, wished event! whence the dire seeds
Of dark intestine broils, of civil war,
And all its dreadful miseries and crimes,
Shall be for ever rooted from the land.
May these dim eyes, long blasted by the rage
Of cruel faction, and my country's woes,
Tired with the toils and vanities of life,
Behold this period, then be closed in peace!
But how this mighty obstacle surmount,
Which love has thrown betwixt? Love, that disturbs
The schemes of wisdom still; that, winged with passion,
Blind and impetuous in its fond pursuits,
Leaves the grey-headed reason far behind.
Alas, how frail the state of human bliss!
When even our honest passions oft destroy it.

I was to blame, in solitude and shades,
Infectious scenes! to trust their youthful hearts.
Would I had marked the rising flame, that now
Burns out with dangerous force! My daughter owns
Her passion for the king; she, trembling, owned it,
With prayers, and tears, and tender supplications,
That almost shook my firmness—and this blank,
Which his rash fondness gave her, shews how much,
To what a wild extravagance he loves——
I see no means—it foils my deepest thought—
How to controul this madness of the king,
That wears the face of virtue, and will thence
Disdain restraint, will, from his generous heart,
Borrow new rage, even speciously oppose
To reason, reason——But it must be done.
My own advice, of which I more and more
Approve, the strict conditions of the will,
Highly demand his marriage with Constantia;
Or else her party has a fair pretence——
And all at once is horror and confusion——
How issue from this maze?——The crowding barons
Here summoned to the palace, meet already,
To pay their homage, and confirm the will.
On a few moments hangs the public fate,
On a few hasty moments——Ha! there shone
A gleam of hope——Yes, with this very paper
I yet will save him——Necessary means,
For good and noble ends, can ne'er be wrong.
In that resistless, that peculiar case,
Deceit is truth and virtue——But how hold
This lion in the toil?——Oh, I will form it
Of such a fatal thread, twist it so strong
With all the ties of honour and of duty,
That his most desperate fury shall not break
The honest snare. Here is the royal hand——
I will beneath it write a perfect, full,
And absolute agreement to the will;
Which read before the nobles of the realm
Assembled, in the sacred face of Sicily,
Constantia present, every heart and eye
Fixed on their monarch, every tongue applauding,
He must submit, his dream of love must vanish.
It shall be done——To me, I know, 'tis ruin;
But safety to the public, to the king.
I will not reason more, I will not listen
Even to the voice of honour. No——'tis fixed!
I here devote me for my prince and country;
Let them be safe, and let me nobly perish!
Behold, Earl Osmond comes, without whose aid
My schemes are all in vain.

Enter OSMOND.

Osm. My lord Siffredi,
I from the council hastened to Constantia,
And have accomplished what we there proposed.
The princess to the will submits her claims.
She with her presence means to grace the senate,
And of your royal charge, young Tancred's hand,
Accept. At first, indeed, it shocked her hopes
Of reigning sole, this new, surprising scene
Of Manfred's son, appointed by the king,
With her joint heir——But I so fully shewed
The justice of the case, the public good,
And sure established peace which thence would rise,
Joined to the strong necessity that urged her,
If on Sicilia's throne she meant to sit,
As to the wise disposal of the will
Her high ambition tamed. Methought, besides,
I could discern, that not from prudence merely
She to this choice submitted.

Sif. Noble Osmond,
You have in this done to the public great
And signal service. Yes, I must avow it;
This frank and ready instance of your zeal,
In such a trying crisis of the state,
When interest and ambition might have warped
Your views, I own this truly generous virtue
Upbraids the rashness of my former judgment.

Osm. Siffredi, no. To you belongs the praise;
The glorious work is yours. Had I not seized,
Improved the wished occasion to root out
Division from the land, and save my country,
I had been base and infamous for ever.
'Tis you, my lord, to whom the many thousands,
That by the barbarous sword of civil war
Had fallen inglorious, owe their lives; to you
The sons of this fair isle, from her first peers
Down to the swain who tills her golden plains,
Owe their safe homes, their soft domestic hours,
And through late time posterity shall bless you,
You who advised this will. I blush to think
I have so long opposed the best good man
In Sicily——With what impartial care
Ought we to watch o'er prejudice and passion,
Nor trust too much the jaundiced eye of party!
Henceforth its vain delusions I renounce,
Its hot determinations, that confine
All merit and all virtue to itself.
To yours I join my hand; with you will own
No interest, and no party but my country.
Nor is your friendship only my ambition:
There is a dearer name, the name of father,
By which I should rejoice to call Siffredi.
Your daughter's hand would to the public weal
Unite my private happiness.

Sif. My lord,
You have my glad consent. To be allied
To your distinguished family and merit,
I shall esteem an honour. From my soul
I here embrace earl Osmond as my friend
And son.

Osm. You make him happy. This assent,
So frank and warm, to what I long have wished,
Engages all my gratitude; at once,
In the first blossom, it matures our friendship.
I from this moment vow myself the friend

And zealous servant of Siffredi's house.

Enter an Officer belonging to the Court.

Offi. [*To Siffredi.*] The king, my lord, demands your speedy presence.

Sif. I will attend him strait—Farewell, my lord;
The senate meets: there, a few moments hence,
I will rejoin you.

Osm. There, my noble lord,
We will complete this salutary work;
Will there begin a new auspicious era.

[*Exeunt Siffredi and Officer.*

Siffredi gives his daughter to my wishes—
But does she give herself? Gay, young, and flattered,
Perhaps engaged, will she her youthful heart
Yield to my harsher, uncomplying years?
I am not formed, by flattery and praise,
By sighs and tears, and all the whining trade
Of love, to feed a fair one's vanity;
To charm at once and spoil her. These soft arts
Suit not my years nor temper; these be left
To boys and doting age. A prudent father,
By nature charged to guide and rule her choice,
Resigns his daughter to a husband's power,
Who with superior dignity, with reason,
And manly tenderness, will ever love her;
Not first a kneeling slave, and then a tyrant.

Enter Barons.

My lords, I greet you well. This wondrous day
Unites us all in amity and friendship.
We meet to-day with open hearts and looks,
Not gloomed by party, scowling on each other,
But all the children of one happy isle,
The social sons of liberty. No pride,
No passion now, no thwarting views divide us:
Prince Manfred's line, at last to William's joined,
Combine us in one family of brothers.
This to the late good king's well-ordered will,
And wise Siffredi's generous care, we owe.
I truly give you joy. First of you all,
I here renounce those errors and divisions,
That have so long disturbed our peace, and seemed,
Fermenting still, to threaten new commotions—
By time instructed, let us not disdain
To quit mistakes. We all, my lords, have erred.
Men may, I find, be honest, though they differ.

1st Baron. Who follows not, my lord, the fair example
You set us all, whate'er be his pretence,
Loves not, with single and unbiassed heart,
His country as he ought.

2d Baron. Oh, beauteous peace!
Sweet union of a state! what else but thou
Gives safety, strength, and glory to a people?
I bow, lord constable, beneath the snow
Of many years; yet in my breast revives
A youthful flame. Methinks, I see again
Those gentle days renewed, that blessed our isle,
Ere by this wasteful fury of division,
Worse than our Ætna's most destructive fires,
It desolated sunk. I see our plains
Unbounded waving with the gifts of harvest;
Our seas with commerce thronged; our busy ports
With cheerful toil. Our Enna blooms afresh;
Afresh the sweets of thymy Hybla flow.
Our nymphs and shepherds, sporting in each vale,
Inspire new song, and wake the pastoral reed—
The tongue of age is fond—Come, come, my sons;
I long to see this prince, of whom the world
Speaks largely well—His father was my friend,
The brave unhappy Manfred—Come, my lords;
We tarry here too long.

Enter two Officers keeping off the Crowd.

One of the Crowd. Shew us our king,
The valiant Manfred's son, who loved the people—
We must, we will behold him—Give us way.

1st Offi. Pray, gentlemen, give back—it must not be—
Give back, I pray——on such a glad occasion,
I would not ill entreat the lowest of you.

2d Man of the Crowd. Nay, give us but a glimpse of our young king!
We, more than any baron of them all,
Will pay him due allegiance.

2d Offi. Friends—indeed
You cannot pass this way——We have strict orders,
To keep for him himself, and for the barons,
All these apartments clear——Go to the gate
That fronts the sea; you there will find admission.

Omnes. Long live king Tancred! Manfred's son—huzza!

[*Crowd goes off. Shouts within.*

1st Offi. I do not marvel at their rage of joy:
He is a brave and amiable prince.
When in my lord Siffredi's house I lived,
Ere, by his favour, I obtained this office,
I there remember well the young count Tancred.
To see him and to love him were the same;
He was so noble in his ways, yet still
So affable and mild——Well, well, old Sicily,
Yet happy days await thee!

2d Offi. Grant it, Heaven!
We have seen sad and troublesome times enough.
He is, they say, to wed the late king's sister,
Constantia.

1st Offi. Friend, of that I greatly doubt.
Or I mistake, or lord Siffredi's daughter,
The gentle Sigismunda, has his heart.
If one may judge by kindly cordial looks,
And fond assiduous care to please each other,
Most certainly they love——Oh, be they blest,
As they deserve! It were great pity aught
Should part a matchless pair; the glory he,
And she the blooming grace of Sicily!

2d Offi. My lord Rodolpho comes.

Enter RODOLPHO *from the senate.*

Rod. My honest friends,
You may retire. [*Officers go out.*] A storm is in the wind.
This will perplexes all. No! Tancred never
Can stoop to these conditions, which at once
Attack his rights, his honour, and his love.
Those wise old men, those plodding, grave state pedants,
Forget the course of youth; their crooked prudence,
To baseness verging still, forgets to take
Into their fine-spun schemes the generous heart,
That, through the cobweb system bursting, lays
Their labours waste—So will this business prove,
Or I mistake the king. Back from the pomp
He seemed at first to shrink, and round his brow
I marked a gathering cloud, when, by his side,
As if designed to share the public homage,
He saw the tyrant's daughter. But confessed,
At least to me, the doubling tempest frowned,
And shook his swelling bosom, when he heard
The unjust, the base conditions of the will.
Uncertain, tost in cruel agitation,
He oft, methought, addressed himself to speak,
And interrupt Siffredi; who appeared,
With conscious haste, to dread that interruption,
And hurried on——But hark! I hear a noise,
As if the assembly rose—Ha! Sigismunda,
Oppressed with grief, and wrapped in pensive sorrow,
Passes along.
[*Sigismunda and attendants pass through the back scene.*]

Enter LAURA.

Laura. Your high-praised friend, the king,
Is false, most vilely false. The meanest slave
Had shewn a nobler heart; nor grossly thus,
By the first bait ambition spread, been gulled.
He Manfred's son! away! it cannot be!
The son of that brave prince could ne'er betray
Those rights so long usurped from his great father,
Which he, this day, by such amazing fortune,
Had just regained; he ne'er could sacrifice
All faith, all honour, gratitude, and love,
Even just resentment of his father's fate,
And pride itself; whate'er exalts a man
Above the grovelling sons of peasant mud,
All in a moment—And for what? why, truly,
For kind permission, gracious leave, to sit
On his own throne with tyrant William's daughter!

Rod. I stand amazed—You surely wrong him, Laura.
There must be some mistake.

Laura. There can be none!
Siffredi read his full and free consent
Before the applauding senate. True, indeed,
A small remain of shame, a timorous weakness,
Even dastardly in falsehood, made him blush
To act this scene in Sigismunda's eye,
Who sunk beneath his perfidy and baseness.
Hence, till to-morrow he adjourned the senate!
To-morrow, fixed with infamy to crown him!
Then, leading off his gay, triumphant princess,
He left the poor unhappy Sigismunda
To bend her trembling steps to that sad home
His faithless vows will render hateful to her——
He comes—Farewell——I cannot bear his presence! [*Exit Laura.*

Enter TANCRED *and* SIFFREDI, *meeting.*

Tan. Avoid me, hoary traitor! Go, Rodolpho,
Give orders that all passages this way
Be shut—Defend me from a hateful world,
The bane of peace and honour—then return—
[*Exit Rodolpho.*
What! dost thou haunt me still? Oh, monstrous insult!
Unparalleled indignity! Just Heaven!
Was ever king, was ever man, so treated;
So trampled into baseness!

Sif. Here, my liege,
Here strike! I nor deserve, nor ask for mercy.

Tan. Distraction!—Oh, my soul!—Hold, reason, hold
Thy giddy seat.—Oh, this inhuman outrage
Unhinges thought!

Sif. Exterminate thy servant.

Tan. All, all but this I could have borne—but this!
This daring insolence beyond example!
This murderous stroke, that stabs my peace for ever!
That wounds me there—there! where the human heart
Most exquisitely feels——

Sif. Oh, bear it not,
My royal lord; appease on me your vengeance!

Tan. Did ever tyrant image aught so cruel?
The lowest slave that crawls upon the earth,
Robbed of each comfort Heaven bestows on mortals,
On the bare ground has still his virtue left,
The sacred treasure of an honest heart!
Which thou hast dared, with rash, audacious hand,
And impious fraud, in me to violate———

Sif. Behold, my lord, that rash, audacious hand,
Which not repents its crime—Oh, glorious, happy!
If, by my ruin, I can save your honour.

Tan. Such honour I renounce; with sovereign scorn
Greatly detest it, and its mean adviser!
Hast thou not dared beneath my name to shelter—
My name, for other purposes designed,
Given, from the fondness of a faithful heart,
With the best love o'erflowing—Hast thou not,
Beneath thy sovereign's name, basely presumed
To shield a lie—a lie, in public uttered,

†

To all deluded Sicily? But know,
This poor contrivance is as weak as base.
In such a wretched toil none can be held
But fools and cowards.——Soon thy flimsy arts,
Touched by my just, my burning indignation,
Shall burst, like threads, in flame.—Thy doating prudence
But more secures the purpose it would shake.
Had my resolves been wavering and doubtful,
This would confirm them, make them fixed as fate;
This adds the only motive that was wanting,
To urge them on through war and desolation.
What! marry her! Constantia! her! the daughter
Of the fell tyrant who destroyed my father!
The very thought is madness! Ere thou seest
The torch of Hymen light these hated nuptials,
Thou shalt behold Sicilia wrapt in flames,
Her cities razed, her vallies drenched with slaughter——
Love set aside, my pride assumes the quarrel;
My honour now is up; in spite of thee,
A world combined against me, I will give
This scattered will in fragments to the winds,
Assert my rights, the freedom of my heart,
Crush all who dare oppose me to the dust,
And heap perdition on thee!

Sif. Sir, 'tis just.
Exhaust on me thy rage; I claim it all.
But for these public threats thy passion utters,
'Tis what thou canst not do.

Tan. I cannot! ha!
Driven to the dreadful brink of such dishonour,
Enough to make the tamest coward brave,
And into fierceness rouse the mildest nature,
What shall arrest my vengeance? Who?

Sif. Thyself.

Tan. Away! Dare not to justify thy crime!
That, that alone can aggravate its horror;
Add insolence to insolence—perhaps
May make my rage forget——

Sif. Oh, let it burst
On this grey head, devoted to thy service!
But when the storm has vented all its fury,
Thou then must hear—nay, more, I know thou wilt——
Wilt hear the calm, yet stronger voice of reason.
Thou must reflect, that a whole people's safety,
The weal of trusted millions, should bear down,
Thyself the judge, the fondest partial pleasure.
Thou must reflect, that there are other duties,
A nobler pride, a more exalted honour,
Superior pleasures far, that will oblige,
Compel thee, to abide by this my deed,
Unwarranted, perhaps, in common justice,
But which necessity, even virtue's tyrant,
With awful voice commanded.—Yes, thou must,
In calmer hours, divest thee of thy love,
These common passions of the vulgar breast,
This boiling heat of youth, and be a king,
The lover of thy people!

Tan. Truths, ill employed,
Abused to colour guilt!——A king! a king!
Yes, I will be a king, but not a slave;
In this will be a king; in this my people
Shall learn to judge how I will guard their rights,
When they behold me vindicate my own.
But have I, say, been treated like a king?——
Heavens! could I stoop to such outrageous usage,
I were a mean, a shameless wretch, unworthy
To wield a sceptre in a land of slaves,
A soil abhorred of virtue; should belie
My father's blood, belie those very maxims,
At other times you taught my youth—Siffredi!
[*In a softened tone of voice.*

Sif. Behold, my prince, thy poor old servant,
Whose darling care, these twenty years, has been
To nurse thee up to virtue; who, for thee,
Thy glory and thy weal, renounces all,
All interest or ambition can pour forth;
What many a selfish father would pursue
Through treachery and crimes. Behold him here,
Bent on his feeble knees, to beg, conjure thee,
With tears to beg thee to controul thy passion,
And save thyself, thy honour, and thy people!
Kneeling with me, behold the many thousands
To thy protection trusted; fathers, mothers,
The sacred front of venerable age,
The tender virgin, and the helpless infant;
The ministers of Heaven, those who maintain,
Around thy throne, the majesty of rule;
And those whose labour, scorched by wind and sun,
Feeds the rejoicing public:—see them all
Here, at thy feet, conjuring thee to save them
From misery and war, from crimes and rapine!
Can there be aught, kind Heaven, in self-indulgence,
To weigh down these, this aggregate of love,
With which compared, the dearest private passion
Is but the wafted dust upon the balance?
Turn not away——Oh! is there not some part
In thy great heart, so sensible to kindness,
And generous warmth, some nobler part, to feel
The prayers and tears of these, the mingled voice
Of Heaven and earth?

Tan. There is, and thou hast touched it.
Rise, rise, Siffredi——Oh, thou hast undone me!
Unkind old man!——Oh, ill-entreated Tancred!
Which way soe'er I turn, dishonour rears
Her hideous front—and misery and ruin!
Was it for this you took such care to form me!
For this imbued me with the quickest sense
Of shame; these finer feelings, that ne'er vex
The common mass of mortals, dully happy
In blessed insensibility? Oh, rather
You should have seared my heart, taught me, that power,
And splendid interest, lord it still o'er virtue;
That, gilded by prosperity and pride,
There is no shame, no meanness; tempered thus,
I had been fit to rule a venal world.

Alas! what meant thy wantonness of prudence?
Why have you raised this miserable conflict,
Betwixt the duties of the king and man?
Set virtue against virtue?——Ah, Siffredi!
'Tis thy superfluous, thy unfeeling wisdom,
That has involved me in a maze of error
Almost beyond retreat.——But hold, my soul,
Thy steady purpose——Tost by various passions,
To this eternal anchor keep.——There is,
Can be, no public without private virtue——
Then, mark me well, observe what I command;
It is the sole expedient now remaining.
To-morrow, when the senate meets again,
Unfold the whole, unravel the deceit:
Nor that alone; try to repair its mischief;
There all thy power, thy eloquence, and interest,
Exert, to reinstate me in my rights,
And from thy own dark snares to disembroil me.
Start not, my lord—this must, and shall be done!
Or here our friendship ends—Howe'er disguised,
Whatever thy pretence, thou art a traitor.

Sif. I should, indeed, deserve the name of traitor,
And even a traitor's fate, had I so slightly,
From principles so weak, done what I did,
As e'er to disavow it.

Tan. Ha!

Sif. My liege,
Expect not this.—Though practised long in courts,
I have not so far learned their subtle trade,
To veer obedient with each gust of passion.
I honour thee, I venerate thy orders;
But honour more my duty. Nought on earth
Shall ever shake me from that solid rock,
Nor smiles, nor frowns.———

Tan. You will not, then?

Sif. I cannot.

Tan. Away! begone!—Oh, my Rodolpho, come,
And save me from this traitor! Hence, I say!
Avoid my presence strait! and know, old man,
Thou, my worst foe, beneath the mask of friendship,
Who, not content to trample in the dust
My dearest rights, dost, with cool insolence,
Persist, and call it duty; hadst thou not
A daughter, that protects thee, thou shouldst feel
The vengeance thou deservest.——No reply!
Away! [*Exit Siffredi.*

Enter RODOLPHO.

Rod. What can incense my prince so highly
Against his friend Siffredi?

Tan. Friend! Rodolpho?
When I have told thee what this friend has done,
How played me like a boy, a base-born wretch,
Who had not heart nor spirit, thou wilt stand
Amazed, and wonder at my stupid patience.

Rod. I heard, with mixed astonishment and grief,
The king's unjust, dishonourable will,
Void in itself—I saw you stung with rage,
And writhing in the snare; just as I went,
At your command to wait you here—but that
Was the king's deed, not his.

Tan. Oh, he advised it!
These many years he has in secret hatched
This black contrivance, glories in the scheme,
And proudly plumes him with his traiterous virtue.
But that was nought, Rodolpho, nothing, nothing!
Oh, that was gentle, blameless to what followed!
I had, my friend, to Sigismunda given,
To hush her fears, in the full gush of fondness,
A blank signed with my hand—and he, oh, Heavens!
Was ever such a wild attempt!—he wrote,
Beneath my name, an absolute compliance
To this detested will—nay, dared to read it
Before myself, on my insulted throne
His idle pageant placed——Oh! words are weak
To paint the pangs, the rage, the indignation,
That whirled, from thought to thought, my soul in tempest,
Now on the point to burst, and now by shame
Repressed——But, in the face of Sicily,
All mad with acclamation, what, Rodolpho,
What could I do? the sole relief that rose
To my distracted mind, was to adjourn
The assembly till to-morrow—But to-morrow
What can be done?—Oh, it avails not what!
I care not what is done—My only care
Is how to clear my faith with Sigismunda.
She thinks me false! She cast a look that killed me!
Oh! I am base in Sigismunda's eye!
The lowest of mankind, the most perfidious!

Rod. This was a strain of insolence indeed,
A daring outrage of so strange a nature
As stuns me quite——

Tan. Cursed be my timid prudence,
That dashed not back, that moment, in his face,
The bold, presumptuous lie!—and cursed this hand,
That, from a start of poor dissimulation,
Led off my Sigismunda's hated rival.
Ah, then! what, poisoned by the false appearance,
What, Sigismunda, were thy thoughts of me?
How, in the silent bitterness of soul,
How didst thou scorn me! hate mankind, thyself,
For trusting to the vows of faithless Tancred?
For such I seemed—I was—the thought distracts me!
I should have cast a flattering world aside,
Rushed from my throne, before them all avowed her,
The choice, the glory of my free-born heart,
And spurned the shameful fetters thrown upon it—
Instead of that—confusion!—what I did
Has clinched the chain, confirmed Siffredi's crime,
And fixed me down to infamy!

Rod. My lord,
Blame not the conduct which your situation
Tore from your tortured heart—What could you do?
Had you, so circumstanced, in open senate,
Before the astonished public, with no friends
Prepared, no party formed, affronted thus
The haughty princess and her powerful faction,
Supported by this will, the sudden stroke,
Abrupt and premature, might have recoiled
Upon yourself, even your own friends revolted,
And turned at once the public scale against you.
Besides, consider, had you then detected
In its fresh guilt this action of Siffredi,
You must, with signal vengeance, have chastised
The treasonable deed—Nothing so mean
As weak, insulted power that dares not punish.
And how would that have suited with your love?
His daughter present too? Trust me, your conduct,
Howe'er abhorrent to a heart like yours,
Was fortunate and wise—Not that I mean
E'er to advise submission———
Tan. Heavens! submission———
Could I descend to bear it, even in thought,
Despise me, you, the world, and Sigismunda!
Submission!—No!—To-morrow's glorious light
Shall flash discovery on the scene of baseness.
Whatever be the risk, by heavens! to-morrow,
I will o'erturn the dirty lie-built schemes
Of these old men, and shew my faithful senate,
That Manfred's son knows to assert and wear,
With undiminished dignity, that crown
This unexpected day has placed upon him.
But this, my friend, these stormy gusts of pride
Are foreign to my love——Till Sigismunda
Be disabused, my breast is tumult all,
And can obey no settled course of reason.
I see her still, I feel her powerful image,
That look, where with reproach complaint was mixed,
Big with soft woe, and gentle indignation,
Which seemed at once to pity and to scorn me——
Oh, let me find her! I too long have left
My Sigismunda to converse with tears,
A prey to thoughts that picture me a villain.
But ah! how, clogged with this accursed state,
A tedious world, shall I now find access?
Her father too—Ten thousand horrors crowd
Into the wild, fantastic eye of love———
Who knows what he may do? Come, then, my friend,
And by thy sister's hand, oh, let me steal
A letter to her bosom—I no longer
Can bear her absence, by the just contempt
She now must brand me with, inflamed to madness.
Fly, my Rodolpho, fly! engage thy sister
To aid my letter.
And this very evening
Secure an interview—I would not bear
This rack another day, not for my kingdom.
Till then, deep plunged in solitude and shades,
I will not see the hated face of man.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber.*

SIGISMUNDA *alone, sitting in a disconsolate posture.*

AH, tyrant prince! ah more than faithless Tancred!
Ungenerous and inhuman in thy falsehood!
Hadst thou this morning, when my hopeless heart,
Submissive to my fortune and my duty,
Had so much spirit left, as to be willing
To give thee back thy vows, ah! hadst thou then
Confessed the sad necessity thy state
Imposed upon thee, and with gentle friendship,
Since we must part at last, our parting softened;
I should indeed—I should have been unhappy,
But not to this extreme—Amidst my grief,
I had, with pensive pleasure, cherished still
The sweet remembrance of thy former love.
Thy image still had dwelt upon my soul,
And made our guiltless woes not undelightful.
But coolly thus—How couldst thou be so cruel?
Thus to revive my hopes, to soothe my love,
And call forth all its tenderness, then sink me
In black despair—What unrelenting pride
Possessed thy breast, that thou couldst bear, unmoved,
To see me bent beneath a weight of shame?
Pangs thou canst never feel! How couldst thou drag me,
In barbarous triumph at a rival's car?
How make me witness to a sight of horror?
That hand, which, but a few short hours ago,
So wantonly abused my simple faith,
Before the attesting world given to another,
Irrevocably given!—There was a time,
When the least cloud that hung upon my brow,
Perhaps imagined only, touched thy pity.
Then, brightened often by the ready tear,
Thy looks were softness all; then the quick heart,
In every nerve alive, forgot itself,
And for each other then we felt alone.
But now, alas! those tender days are fled;
Now thou canst see me wretched, pierced with anguish,
With studied anguish of thy own creating,
Nor wet thy hardened eye—Hold, let me think—
I wrong thee sure; thou canst not be so base,
As meanly in my misery to triumph—

What is it, then!—'Tis fickleness of nature,
'Tis sickly love extinguished by ambition——
Is there, kind Heaven, no constancy in man?
No stedfast truth, no generous fixed affection,
That can bear up against a selfish world?
No, there is none—even Tancred is inconstant!
[*Rising.*
Hence! let me fly this scene!—Whate'er I see,
These roofs, these walls, each object that surrounds me,
Are tainted with his vows—But whither fly?
The groves are worse; the soft retreat of Belmont,
Its deepening glooms, gay lawns, and airy summits,
Will wound my busy memory to torture,
And all its shades will whisper—faithless Tancred!—
My father comes—How, sunk in this disorder,
Shall I sustain his presence?

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. Sigismunda,
My dearest child! I grieve to find thee thus
A prey to tears. I know the powerful cause
From which they flow, and therefore can excuse them,
But not their wilful obstinate continuance.
Come, rouse thee, then, call up thy drooping spirit,
Awake to reason from this dream of love,
And shew the world thou art Siffredi's daughter.
Sig. Alas! I am unworthy of that name.
Sif. Thou art indeed to blame; thou hast too rashly
Engaged thy heart, without a father's sanction.
But this I can forgive. The king has virtues,
That plead thy full excuse; nor was I void
Of blame, to trust thee to those dangerous virtues.
Then dread not my reproaches. Though he blames,
Thy tender father pities, more than blames thee.
Thou art my daughter still; and, if thy heart
Will now resume its pride, assert itself,
And greatly rise superior to this trial,
I to my warmest confidence again
Will take thee, and esteem thee more, my daughter.
Sig. Oh, you are gentler far than I deserve!
It is, it ever was, my darling pride,
To bend my soul to your supreme commands,
Your wisest will; and though, by love betrayed—
Alas! and punished too—I have transgressed
The nicest bounds of duty, yet I feel
A sentiment of tenderness, a source
Of filial nature springing in my breast,
That, should it kill me, shall controul this passion,
And make me all submission and obedience
To you, my honoured lord, the best of fathers.
Sif. Come to my arms, thou comfort of my age!
Thou only joy and hope of these grey hairs!
Come, let me take thee to a parent's heart;
There, with the kindly aid of my advice,
Even with the dew of these paternal tears,
Revive and nourish this becoming spirit——
Then thou dost promise me, my Sigismunda——
Thy father stoops to make it his request—
Thou wilt resign thy fond presumptuous hopes,
And henceforth never more indulge one thought,
That in the light of love regards the king?
Sig. Hopes I have none!—Those by this fatal day
Are blasted all—But from my soul to banish,
While weeping memory there retains her seat,
Thoughts which the purest bosom might have cherished,
Once my delight, now even in anguish charming,
Is more, my lord, than I can promise.
Sif. Absence, and time, the softener of our passions,
Will conquer this. Meantime, I hope from thee
A generous great effort; that thou wilt now
Exert thy utmost force, nor languish thus
Beneath the vain extravagance of love.
Let not thy father blush to hear it said,
His daughter was so weak, e'er to admit
A thought so void of reason, that a king
Should, to his rank, his honour, and his glory,
The high important duties of a throne,
Even to his throne itself, madly prefer
A wild romantic passion, the fond child
Of youthful dreaming thought and vacant hours;
That he should quit his heaven-appointed station,
Desert his awful charge, the care of all
The toiling millions which this isle contains;
Nay, more, should plunge them into war and ruin,
And all to soothe a sick imagination,
A miserable weakness. What! must for thee,
To make thee blest, Sicilia be unhappy?
The king himself, lost to the nobler sense
Of manly praise, become the piteous hero
Of some soft tale, and rush on sure destruction?
Canst thou, my daughter, let the monstrous thought
Possess one moment thy perverted fancy?
Rouse thee, for shame! and if a spark of virtue
Lies slumbering in thy soul, bid it blaze forth;
Nor sink unequal to the glorious lesson,
This day thy lover gave thee from his throne.
Sig. Ah, that was not from virtue!—Had, my father,
That been his aim, I yield to what you say;
'Tis powerful truth, unanswerable reason.
Then, then, with sad but duteous resignation,
I had submitted as became your daughter;
But in that moment, when my humbled hopes
Were to my duty reconciled, to raise them
To yet a fonder height than e'er they knew,

Then rudely dash them down—There is the sting!
The blasting view is ever present to me——
Why did you drag me to a sight so cruel!
Sif. It was a scene to fire thy emulation.
Sig. It was a scene of perfidy!—But know,
I will do more than imitate the king—
For he is false!—I, though sincerely pierced
With the best, truest passion, ever touched
A virgin's breast, here vow to Heaven and you,
Though from my heart I cannot, from my hopes
To cast this prince—What would you more, my father?
Sif. Yes, one thing more—thy father then is happy—
Though by the voice of innocence and virtue
Absolved, we live not to ourselves alone:
A rigorous world, with peremptory sway,
Subjects us all, and even the noblest most.
This world from thee, my honour and thy own,
Demands one step; a step, by which, convinced,
The king may see thy heart disdains to wear
A chain which his has greatly thrown aside.
'Tis fitting too, thy sex's pride commands thee,
To shew the approving world thou canst resign,
As well as he, nor with inferior spirit,
A passion fatal to the public weal.
But above all, thou must root out for ever
From the king's breast the least remain of hope,
And henceforth make his mentioned love dishonour.
These things, my daughter, that must needs be done,
Can but this way be done—by the safe refuge,
The sacred shelter, of a husband's arms.
And there is one——
Sig. Good heavens! what means my lord?
Sif. One of illustrious family, high rank,
Yet still of higher dignity and merit,
Who can and will protect thee; one to awe
The king himself—Nay, hear me, Sigismunda—
The noble Osmond courts thee for his bride,
And has my plighted word—This day—
Sig. [*Kneeling.*] My father!
Let me with trembling arms embrace thy knees!
Oh, if you ever wish to see me happy;
If e'er in infant years I gave you joy,
When, as I prattling twined around your neck,
You snatched me to your bosom, kissed my eyes,
And melting said you saw my mother there;
Oh, save me from that worst severity
Of fate! Oh, outrage not my breaking heart
To that degree!—I cannot!—'tis impossible!—
So soon withdraw it, give it to another—
Hear me, my dearest father; hear the voice
Of nature and humanity, that plead
As well as justice for me!——Not to choose
Without your wise direction may be duty;
But still my choice is free—that is a right,
Which even the lowest slave can never lose;
And would you thus degrade me!—make me base?
For such it were to give my worthless person
Without my heart, an injury to Osmond,
The highest can be done—Let me, my lord—
Or I shall die, shall, by the sudden change,
Be to distraction shocked—Let me wear out
My hapless days in solitude and silence,
Far from the malice of a prying world;
At least—you cannot sure refuse me this——
Give me a little time—I will do all,
All I can do, to please you!—Oh, your eye
Sheds a kind beam——
Sif. My daughter! you abuse
The softness of my nature—
Sig. Here, my father,
'Till you relent, here will I grow for ever!
Sif. Rise, Sigismunda.—Though you touch my heart,
Nothing can shake the inexorable dictates
Of honour, duty, and determined reason.
Then by the holy ties of filial love,
Resolve, I charge thee, to receive earl Osmond,
As suits the man who is thy father's choice,
And worthy of thy hand—I go to bring him—
Sig. Spare me, my dearest father!
Sif. [*Aside.*] I must rush
From her soft grasp, or nature will betray me!
Oh, grant us, Heaven! that fortitude of mind,
Which listens to our duty, not our passions!
Quit me, my child!
Sig. You cannot, oh, my father!
You cannot leave me thus!
Sif. Come hither, Laura,
Come to thy friend. Now shew thyself a friend.
Combat her weakness; dissipate her tears:
Cherish, and reconcile her to her duty.
[*Exit Siffredi.*

Enter LAURA.

Sig. Oh, woe on woe! distressed by love and duty!
Oh, every way unhappy Sigismunda!
Laura. Forgive me, madam, if I blame your grief.
How can you waste your tears on one so false?
Unworthy of your tenderness; to whom
Nought but contempt is due, and indignation?
Sig. You know not half the horrors of my fate!
I might perhaps have learned to scorn his falsehood;
Nay, when the first sad burst of tears was past,
I might have roused my pride and scorned himself—
But 'tis too much, this greatest last misfortune—
Oh, whither shall I fly? Where hide me, Laura,
From the dire scene my father now prepares?
Laura. What thus alarms you, madam?
Sig. Can it be?
Can!——ah, no!——at once give to another
My violated heart? in one wild moment?
He brings earl Osmond to receive my vows.
Oh, dreadful change! for Tancred, haughty Osmond!

Laura. Now, on my soul, 'tis what an outraged heart
Like yours should wish! I should, by Heavens, esteem it
Most exquisite revenge!
Sig. Revenge! on whom?
On my own heart, already but too wretched!
Laura. On him! this Tancred! who has basely sold,
For the dull form of despicable grandeur,
His faith, his love! At once a slave and tyrant!
Sig. Oh, rail at me! at my believing folly!
My vain ill-founded hopes! but spare him, Laura!
Laura. Who raised these hopes? Who triumphs o'er that weakness?
Pardon the word—you greatly merit him;
Better than him, with all his giddy pomp;
You raised him by your smiles, when he was nothing.
Where is your woman's pride, that guardian spirit,
Given us to dash the perfidy of man?
Ye powers! I cannot bear the thought with patience——
Yet recent from the most unsparing vows
The tongue of love e'er lavished; from your hopes
So vainly, idly, cruelly deluded;
Before the public thus, before your father,
By an irrevocable solemn deed,
With such inhuman scorn, to throw you from him:
To give his faithless hand, yet warm from thine,
With complicated meanness, to Constantia!
And, to complete his crime, when thy weak limbs
Could scarce support thee, then, of thee regardless,
To lead her off!
Sig. That was indeed a sight
To poison love; to turn it into rage,
And keen contempt. What means this stupid weakness
That hangs upon me! Hence, unworthy tears,
Disgrace my cheek no more! No more, my heart,
For one so coolly false, or meanly fickle——
Oh, it imports not which——dare to suggest
The least excuse!——Yes, traitor, I will wring
Thy pride, will turn thy triumph to confusion!
I will not pine away my days for thee,
Sighing to brooks and groves; while, with vain pity,
You in a rival's arms lament my fate——
No, let me perish, ere I tamely be
That soft, that patient, gentle Sigismunda,
Who can console her with the wretched boast,
She was for thee unhappy!—If I am,
I will be nobly so!—Sicilia's daughters
Shall, wondering, see in me a great example
Of one who punished an ill-judging heart,
Who made it bow to what it most abhorred!
Crushed it to misery! for having thus
So lightly listened to a worthless lover!
Laura. At last it mounts, the kindling pride of virtue;
Trust me, thy marriage will embitter his——
Sig. Oh, may the furies light his nuptial torch!
Be it accursed as mine! for the fair peace,
The tender joys of hymeneal love,
May jealousy awaked, and fell remorse,
Pour all their fiercest venom through his breast!
Where the fates lead, and blind revenge, I follow.——
Let me not think——By injured love! I vow,
Thou shalt, base prince! perfidious and inhuman!
Thou shalt behold me in another's arms;
In his thou hatest! Osmond's!
Laura. That will grind
His heart with secret rage: Ay, that will sting
His soul to madness; set him up a terror,
A spectacle of woe to faithless lovers!
Your cooler thought, besides, will of the change
Approve, and think it happy. Noble Osmond
From the same stock with him derives his birth.
First of Sicilian barons, prudent, brave,
Of strictest honour, and by all revered——
Sig. Talk not of Osmond, but perfidious Tancred!
Rail at him, rail! invent new names of scorn!
Assist me, Laura; lend my rage fresh fuel;
Support my staggering purpose, which already
Begins to fail me—Ah, my vaunts how vain!
How have I lied to my own heart! Alas!
My tears return, the mighty flood o'erwhelms me!
Ten thousand crowding images distract
My tortured thought——And is it come to this?
Our hopes, our vows, our oft repeated wishes,
Breathed from the fervent soul, and full of heaven,
To make each other happy—come to this!
Laura. If thy own peace and honour cannot keep
Thy resolution fixed, yet, Sigismunda,
Oh, think, how deeply, how beyond retreat,
Thy father is engaged!
Sig. Ah, wretched weakness!
That thus enthrals my soul, that chases thence
Each nobler thought, the sense of every duty!
And have I then no tears for thee, my father?
Can I forget thy cares, from helpless years,
Thy tenderness for me? an eye still beamed
With love; a brow that never knew a frown;
Nor a harsh word thy tongue; Shall I for these
Repay thy stooping venerable age
With shame, disquiet, anguish, and dishonour?
It must not be! Thou first of angels! come,
Sweet filial piety, and firm my breast!
Yes, let one daughter to her fate submit,
Be nobly wretched—but her father happy!——
Laura!—they come! Oh, heavens, I cannot stand

The horrid trial!—Open, open earth!
And hide me from their view.
Laura. Madam!

Enter SIFFREDI *and* OSMOND.

Sif. My daughter,
Behold my noble friend, who courts thy hand,
And whom to call my son I shall be proud;
Nor shall I less be pleased in this alliance,
To see thee happy.
Osm. Think not, I presume,
Madam, on this your father's kind consent,
To make me blest. I love you from a heart,
That seeks your good superior to my own;
And will, by every art of tender friendship,
Consult your dearest welfare. May I hope,
Yours does not disavow your father's choice?
Sig. I am a daughter, sir—and have no power
O'er my own heart—I die—Support me, Laura.
[*Faints.*
Sif. Help—Bear her off—She breathes—my daughter!
Sig. Oh,
Forgive my weakness—soft—my Laura, lead me—
To my apartment.
[*Exeunt Sigismunda and Laura.*
Sif. Pardon me, my lord,
If, by this sudden accident alarmed,
I leave you for a moment. [*Exit Siffredi.*
Osm. Let me think——
What can this mean?——Is it to me aversion?
Or is it, as I feared, she loves another?
Ha!—yes—perhaps the king, the young count Tancred;
They were bred up together——Surely that,
That cannot be—Has he not given his hand,
In the most solemn manner, to Constantia?
Does not his crown depend upon the deed?
No—if they loved, and this old statesman knew it,
He could not to a king prefer a subject.
His virtues I esteem—nay more, I trust them—
So far as virtue goes—but could he place
His daughter on the throne of Sicily——
Oh, 'tis a glorious bribe, too much for man!
What is it then? I care not what it be.
My honour now, my dignity demands,
That my proposed alliance, by her father,
And even herself accepted, be not scorned.
I love her too—I never knew till now
To what a pitch I loved her. Oh, she shot
Ten thousand charms into my inmost soul!
She looked so mild, so amiably gentle,
She bowed her head, she glowed with such confusion,
Such loveliness of modesty! She is,
In gracious mind, in manners, and in person,
The perfect model of all female beauty!
She must be mine—She is!—If yet her heart
Consents not to my happiness, her duty,
Joined to my tender cares, will gain so much
Upon her generous nature—That will follow.
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The garden belonging to* SIFFREDI'S *house.*

Enter SIGISMUNDA *and* LAURA.

Sig. [*With a letter in her hand.*] 'Tis done!—
I am a slave!—The fatal vow
Has passed my lips!—Methought, in those sad moments,
The tombs around, the saints, the darkened altar,
And all the trembling shrines, with horror shook.
But here is still new matter of distress.
Oh, Tancred, cease to persecute me more!
Oh, grudge me not some calmer state of woe;
Some quiet gloom to shade my hopeless days,
Where I may never hear of love and thee!
Has Laura, too, conspired against my peace?
Why did you take this letter?—Bear it back——
I will not court new pain. [*Giving her the letter.*
Laura. Madam, Rodolpho
Urged me so much, nay, even with tears conjured me,
But this once more to serve the unhappy king—
For such he said he was—that though enraged,
Equal with thee, at his inhuman falsehood,
I could not to my brother's fervent prayers
Refuse this office——Read it——His excuses
Will only more expose his falsehood.
Sig. No:
It suits not Osmond's wife to read one line
From that contagious hand—she knows too well!
Laura. He paints him out distressed beyond expression;
Even on the point of madness. Wild as winds,
And fighting seas, he raves. His passions mix,
With ceaseless rage, all in each giddy moment.
He dies to see you, and to clear his faith.
Sig. Save me from that!—That would be worse than all!
Laura. I but report my brother's words; who then
Began to talk of some dark imposition,
That had deceived us all; when, interrupted,
We heard your father and earl Osmond near,
As summoned to Constantia's court they went.
Sig. Ha! imposition?——Well, if I am doomed
To be, o'er all my sex, the wretch of love,
In vain I would resist—Give me the letter——
To know the worst is some relief——Alas,
It was not thus, with such dire palpitations,
That, Tancred, once I used to read thy letters.
[*Attempting to read the letter, but gives it to Laura.*

Ah, fond remembrance blinds me! Read it, Laura.

Laura. [*Reads.*] 'Deliver me, Sigismunda, 'from that most exquisite misery which a faithful 'heart can suffer—To be thought base by her, 'from whose esteem even virtue borrows new 'charms. When I submitted to my cruel situa- 'tion, it was not falsehood you beheld, but an 'excess of love. Rather than endanger that, I, 'for a while, gave up my honour. Every moment 'till I see you stabs me with severer pangs than 'real guilt itself can feel. Let me then conjure 'you to meet me in the garden, towards the close 'of the day, when I will explain this mystery. 'We have been most inhumanly abused; and 'that by means of the very paper which I gave 'you, from the warmest sincerity of love, to as- 'sure to you the heart and hand of

TANCRED.'

Sig. There, Laura, there, the dreadful secret sprung!
That paper! ah, that paper! it suggests
A thousand horrid thoughts—I to my father
Gave it! and he perhaps—I dare not cast
A look that way—If yet indeed you love me,
Oh, blast me not, kind Tancred, with the truth!
Oh, pitying, keep me ignorant for ever!
What strange peculiar misery is mine?
Reduced to wish the man I love were false!
Why was I hurried to a step so rash?
Repairless woe!—I might have waited, sure,
A few short hours—No duty that forbade—
I owed thy love that justice; till this day
Thy love an image of all perfect goodness!
A beam from heaven that glowed with every virtue!
And have I thrown this prize of life away?
The piteous wreck of one distracted moment?
Ah, the cold prudence of remorseless age!
Ah, parents, traitors to your children's bliss!
Ah, cursed! ah, blind revenge!—On every hand
I was betrayed—You, Laura, too, betrayed me!

Laura. Who, who but he, whate'er he writes, betrayed you?

Or false or pusillanimous. For once,
I will with you suppose, that his agreement
To the king's will was forged—Though forged by whom?
Your father scorns the crime—Yet what avails it?
This, if it clears his truth, condemns his spirit.
A youthful king, by love and honour fired,
Patient to sit on his insulted throne,
And let an outrage, of so high a nature,
Unpunished pass, unchecked, uncontradicted—
Oh, 'tis a meanness equal even to falsehood.

Sig. Laura, no more—We have already judged
Too largely without knowledge. Oft, what seems
A trifle, a mere nothing, by itself,
In some nice situation turns the scale
Of fate, and rules the most important actions.
Yes, I begin to feel a sad presage!
I am undone, from that eternal source
Of human woes—the judgment of the passions.
But what have I to do with these excuses?
Oh, cease, my treacherous heart, to give them room!
It suits not thee to plead a lover's cause:
Even to lament my fate is now dishonour.
Nought now remains, but with relentless purpose,
To shun all interviews, all clearing up
Of this dark scene; to wrap myself in gloom,
In solitude and shades; there to devour
The silent sorrows ever swelling here;
And since I must be wretched—for I must—
To claim the mighty misery myself,
Engross it all, and spare a hapless father.
Hence, let me fly!—The hour approaches——

Laura. Madam,
Behold he comes—the king—

Sig. Heavens! how escape?
No—I will stay—This one last meeting—Leave me. [*Exit Laura.*

Enter TANCRED.

Tan. And are these long, long hours of torture past?
My life! my Sigismunda!

[*Throwing himself at her feet.*

Sig. Rise, my lord.
To see my sovereign thus no more becomes me.

Tan. Oh, let me kiss the ground on which you tread!
Let me exhale my soul in softest transport,
Since I again behold my Sigismunda! [*Rising.*
Unkind! how couldst thou ever deem me false?
How thus dishonour love?—Oh, I could much
Embitter my complaint!—how low were then
Thy thoughts of me! How didst thou then affront
The human heart itself? After the vows,
The fervent truth, the tender protestations,
Which mine has often poured, to let thy breast,
Whate'er the appearance was, admit suspicion?

Sig. How! when I heard myself your full consent
To the late king's so just and prudent will?
Heard it before you read, in solemn senate?
When I beheld you give your royal hand
To her, whose birth and dignity of right
Demand that high alliance! Yes, my lord,
You have done well. The man, whom Heaven appoints
To govern others, should himself first learn
To bend his passions to the sway of reason.
In all, you have done well; but when you bid
My humbled hopes look up to you again,
And soothed with wanton cruelty my weakness—
That too was well—My vanity deserved
The sharp rebuke, whose fond extravagance
Could ever dream to balance your repose,
Your glory, and the welfare of a people.

Tan. Chide on, chide on. Thy soft reproaches, now,
Instead of wounding, only soothe my fondness.

†

No, no, thou charming consort of my soul!
I never loved thee with such faithful ardour,
As in that cruel, miserable moment
You thought me false; when even my honour stooped
To wear for thee a baffled face of baseness.
It was thy barbarous father, Sigismunda,
Who caught me in the toil. He turned that paper,
Meant for the assuring bond of nuptial love,
To ruin it for ever; he, he wrote
That forged consent, you heard, beneath my name,
Nay, dared, before my outraged throne, to read it!
Had he not been thy father——Ha! my love!
You tremble, you grow pale!

Sig. Oh, leave me, Tancred!

Tan. No!—Leave thee!—Never! never till you set
My heart at peace! till these dear lips again
Pronounce thee mine! Without thee, I renounce
Myself, my friends, the world—Here on this hand—

Sig. My lord, forget that hand, which never now
Can be to thine united———

Tan. Sigismunda!
What dost thou mean?—Thy words, thy look, thy manner,
Seem to conceal some horrid secret—Heavens!——
No—that was wild——Distraction fires the thought!—

Sig. Inquire no more——I never can be thine.

Tan. What, who shall interpose? Who dares attempt
To brave the fury of an injured king,
Who, ere he sees thee ravished from his hopes,
Will wrap all blazing Sicily in flames?——

Sig. In vain your power, my lord—'Tis fatal error,
Joined to my father's unrelenting will,
Has placed an everlasting bar betwixt us——
I am Earl Osmond's——wife.

Tan. Earl Osmond's wife!——

[*After a long pause, during which they look at one another with the highest agitation, and most tender distress.*]

Heavens! did I hear thee right? What! married! married!
Lost to thy faithful Tancred? lost for ever!
Couldst thou then doom me to such matchless woe,
Without so much as hearing me?—Distraction!——
Alas! what hast thou done? Ah, Sigismunda!
Thy rash credulity has done a deed,
Which, of two happiest lovers that e'er felt
The blissful power, has made two finished wretches!
But—madness!—Sure, thou knowest it cannot be!
This hand is mine! a thousand thousand vows—

Enter OSMOND.

Osm. [*Snatching her hand from the king.*]
Madam, this hand, by the most solemn rites,
A little hour ago, was given to me;
And did not sovereign honour now command me,
Never but with my life to quit my claim,
I would renounce it—thus!

Tan. Ha! who art thou,
Presumptuous man!

Sig. [*Aside.*] Where is my father? Heaven!
[*Goes out.*

Osm. One thou shouldst better know—Yes—view me, one
Who can and will maintain his rights and honour,
Against a faithless prince, an upstart king,
Whose first base deed is what a hardened tyrant
Would blush to act.

Tan. Insolent Osmond! know,
This upstart king will hurl confusion on thee,
And all who shall invade his sacred rights,
Prior to thine—thine, founded on compulsion,
On infamous deceit, while his proceed
From mutual love, and free long plighted faith.
She is, and shall be mine!—I will annul,
By the high power with which the laws invest me,
Those guilty forms in which you have entrapped,
Basely entrapped, to thy detested nuptials,
My queen betrothed, who has my heart, my hand,
And shall partake my throne—If, haughty lord,
If this thou didst not know, then know it now;
And know, besides, as I have told thee this,
Shouldst thou but think to urge thy treason further—
Than treason more! treason against my love!—
Thy life shall answer for it.

Osm. Ha! my life!———
It moves my scorn to hear thy empty threats.
When was it that a Norman baron's life
Became so vile, as on the frown of kings
To hang?—Of that, my lord, the law must judge:
Or, if the law be weak, my guardian sword——

Tan. Dare not to touch it, traitor, lest my rage
Break loose, and do a deed that misbecomes me.

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. My gracious lord, what is it I behold!
My sovereign in contention with his subjects?
Surely this house deserves from royal Tancred
A little more regard, than to be made
A scene of trouble, and unseemly jars.
It grieves my soul, it baffles every hope,
It makes me sick of life, to see thy glory
Thus blasted in the bud.—Heavens! can your highness,
From your exalted character descend,
The dignity of virtue; and, instead
Of being the protector of our rights,
The holy guardian of domestic bliss,

Unkindly thus disturb the sweet repose,
The secret peace of families, for which
Alone the free-born race of man to laws
And government submitted?

Tan. My lord Siffredi,
Spare thy rebuke. The duties of my station
Are not to me unknown. But thou, old man,
Dost thou not blush to talk of rights invaded,
And of our best, our dearest bliss disturbed;
Thou, who, with more than barbarous perfidy,
Hast trampled all allegiance, justice, truth,
Humanity itself, beneath thy feet?
Thou knowest thou hast—I could, to thy confusion,
Return thy hard reproaches; but I spare thee
Before this lord, for whose ill-sorted friendship
Thou hast most basely sacrificed thy daughter!
Farewell, my lord.—For thee, lord constable,
Who dost presume to lift thy surly eye
To my soft love, my gentle Sigismunda,
I once again command thee, on thy life——
Yes—chew thy rage—but mark me—on thy life,
No furthur urge thy arrogant pretensions!
[*Exit Tan.*

Osm. Ha! Arrogant pretensions! Heaven and earth!
What! arrogant pretensions to my wife?
My wedded wife! Where are we? in a land
Of civil rule, of liberty, and laws?——
Not, on my life, pursue them?—Giddy prince!
My life disdains thy nod. It is the gift
Of parent Heaven, who gave me, too, an arm,
A spirit to defend it against tyrants.
The Norman race, the sons of mighty Rollo,
Who, rushing in a tempest from the north,
Great nurse of generous freemen, bravely won,
With their own swords, their seats, and still possess them
By the same noble tenure, are not used
To hear such language.——If I now desist,
Then brand me for a coward! deem me villain!
A traitor to the public! By this conduct
Deceived, betrayed, insulted, tyrannized!
Mine is a common cause. My arm shall guard,
Mixed with my own, the rights of each Sicilian,
Of social life, and of mankind in general.
Ere to thy tyrant rage they fall a prey,
I shall find means to shake thy tottering throne,
Which this illegal, this perfidious usage,
Forfeits at once, and crush thee in the ruins!—
Constantia is my queen!

Sif. Lord constable,
Let us be stedfast in the right; but let us
Act with cool prudence, and with manly temper,
As well as manly firmness. True, I own,
The indignities you suffer are so high,
As might even justify what now you threaten.
But if, my lord, we can prevent the woes,
The cruel horrors of intestine war,
Yet hold, untouched, our liberties and laws;
Oh, let us, raised above the turbid sphere
Of little selfish passions, nobly do it!
Nor to our hot, intemperate pride, pour out
A dire libation of Sicilian blood.
'Tis godlike magnanimity to keep,
When most provoked, our reason calm and clear,
And execute her will, from a strong sense
Of what is right, without the vulgar aid
Of heat and passion, which, though honest, bears us
Often too far. Remember that my house
Protects my daughter still; and ere I saw her
Thus ravished from us, by the arm of power,
This arm should act the Roman father's part.
Fear not; be temperate; all will yet be well.
I know the king. At first his passions burst,
Quick as the lightning's flash; but in his breast
Honour and justice dwell—Trust me, to reason
He will return.

Osm. He will!—By Heavens, he shall!——
You know the king—I wish, my lord Siffredi,
That you had deigned to tell me all you knew—
And would you have me wait, with duteous patience,
Till he return to reason? Ye just powers!
When he has planted on our necks his foot,
And trod us into slaves; when his vain pride
Is cloyed with our submission; if, at last,
He finds his arm too weak to shake the frame
Of wide-established order out of joint,
And overturn all justice; then, perchance,
He, in a fit of sickly kind repentance,
May make a merit to return to reason.
No, no, my lord! there is a nobler way,
To teach the blind oppressive fury reason:
Oft has the lustre of avenging steel
Unsealed her stupid eyes—The sword is reason!

Enter RODOLPHO *with Guards.*

Rod. My lord high constable of Sicily,
In the king's name, and by his special order,
I here arrest you prisoner of state.

Osm. What king? I know no king of Sicily,
Unless he be the husband of Constantia.

Rod. Then know him now—behold his royal orders,
To bear you to the castle of Palermo.

Sif. Let the big torrent foam its madness off!
Submit, my lord.—No castle long can hold
Our wrongs—This, more than friendship or alliance,
Confirms me thine; this binds me to thy fortunes,
By the strong tie of common injury,
Which nothing can dissolve.—I grieve, Rodolpho,
To see the reign in such unhappy sort
Begin.

Osm. The reign! the usurpation call it!
This meteor king may blaze awhile, but soon
Must spend his idle terrors—Sir, lead on——
Farewell, my lord—more than my life and fortune,
Remember well, is in your hands—my honour!

Sif. Our honour is the same. My son, farewell———

We shall not long be parted. On these eyes
Sleep shall not shed his balm, till I behold thee
Restored to freedom, or partake thy bonds!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Chamber.*

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. THE prospect lowers around. I found the king,
Though calmed a little, with subsiding tempest,
As suits his generous nature, yet in love
Abated nought, most ardent in his purpose;
Inexorably fixed, whate'er the risk,
To claim my daughter, and dissolve this marriage——
I have embarked, upon a perilous sea,
A mighty treasure. Here the rapid youth,
The impetuous passions of a lover king,
Check my bold purpose; and there, the jealous pride,
The impatient honour, of a haughty lord,
Of the first rank, in interest and dependance
Near equal to the king, forbid retreat.
My honour, too, the same unchanged conviction,
That these my measures were, and still remain,
Of absolute necessity, to save
The land from civil fury, urge me on.
But how proceed?——I only faster rush
Upon the desperate evils I would shun.
Whatever the motive be, deceit, I fear,
And harsh unnatural force, are not the means
Of public welfare, or of private bliss.——
Bear witness, Heaven! thou mind inspecting eye!
My breast is pure. I have preferred my duty,
The good and safety of my fellow-subjects,
To all those views that fire the selfish race
Of mortal men, and mix them in eternal broils.

Enter an Officer belonging to SIFFREDI.

Offi. My lord, a man of noble port, his face
Wrapped in disguise, is earnest for admission.
Sif. Go, bid him enter—— [*Officer goes out.*
Ha! wrapped in disguise!
And at this late unseasonable hour!
When o'er the world tremendous midnight reigns,
By the dire gloom of raging tempest doubled!

Enter OSMOND, *discovering himself.*

Sif. What! ha! earl Osmond, you?——Welcome, once more,
To this glad roof!——But why in this disguise?
Would I could hope the king exceeds his promise!
I have his faith, soon as to-morrow's sun
Shall gild Sicilia's cliffs, you shall be free.
Has some good angel turned his heart to justice?
Osm. It is not by the favour of count Tancred
That I am here. As much I scorn his favour,
As I defy his tyranny and threats.——
Our friend Goffredo, who commands the castle,
On my parole, ere dawn to render back
My person, has permitted me this freedom.
Know then, the faithless outrage of to-day,
By him committed whom you call the king,
Has roused Constantia's court. Our friends, the friends
Of virtue, justice, and of public faith,
Ripe for revolt, are in high ferment all.
This, this, they say, exceeds whate'er deformed
The miserable days we saw beneath
William the Bad. This saps the solid base,
At once, of government and private life:
This shameless imposition on the faith,
The majesty of senates, this lewd insult,
This violation of the rights of men;
Added to these, his ignominious treatment
Of her, the illustrious offspring of our kings,
Sicilia's hope, and now our royal mistress.
You know, my lord, how grossly these infringe
The late king's will; which orders, if count Tancred
Make not Constantia partner of his throne,
That he be quite excluded the succession,
And she to Henry given, king of the Romans,
The potent emperor Barbarossa's son,
Who seeks, with earnest instance, her alliance.
I thence of you, as guardian of the laws,
As guardian of this will, to you intrusted,
Desire, nay, more, demand your instant aid,
To see it put in vigorous execution.
Sif. You cannot doubt, my lord, of my concurrence.
Who, more than I, have laboured this great point?
'Tis my own plan; and if I drop it now,
I should be justly branded with the shame
Of rash advice, or despicable weakness.
But let us not precipitate the matter.
Constantia's friends are numerous and strong;
Yet Tancred's, trust me, are of equal force:
E'er since the secret of his birth was known,
The people all are in a tumult hurled,
Of boundless joy, to hear there lives a prince
Of mighty Guiscard's line. Numbers, besides,
Of powerful barons, who at heart had pined,
To see the reign of their renowned forefathers,
Won by immortal deeds of matchless valour,
Pass from the gallant Normans to the Suevi,
Will, with a kind of rage, espouse his cause.
'Tis so, my lord—be not by passion blinded——
'Tis surely so.——Oh, if our prating virtue
Dwells not in words alone—Oh, let us join,
My generous Osmond, to avert these woes,
And yet sustain our tottering Norman kingdom!
Osm. But how, Siffredi, how?—If, by soft means,

We can maintain our rights, and save our country,
May his unnatural blood first stain the sword,
Who, with unpitying fury, first shall draw it!
Sif. I have a thought—The glorious work be thine!
But it requires an awful flight of virtue,
Above the passions of the vulgar breast,
And thence from thee I hope it, noble Osmond.
—Suppose my daughter, to her god devoted,
Were placed within some convent's sacred verge,
Beneath the dread protection of the altar.——
Osm. Ere then, by Heavens! I would devoutly shave
My holy scalp, turn whining monk myself,
And pray incessant for the tyrant's safety.
What! how! because an insolent invader,
A sacrilegious tyrant, in contempt
Of all those noblest rights, which to maintain
Is man's peculiar pride, demands my wife;
That I shall thus betray the common cause
Of human kind!——
Tamely yield her up,
Even in the manner you propose!——Oh, then
I were supremely vile! degraded! shamed!
The scorn of manhood! and abhorred of honour!
Sif. There is, my lord, an honour, the calm child
Of reason, of humanity, and mercy,
Superior far to this punctilious dæmon,
That singly minds itself, and oft embroils,
With proud barbarian niceties, the world.
Osm. My lord, my lord, I cannot brook your prudence;
It holds a pulse unequal to my blood——
Unblemished honour is the flower of virtue!
The vivifying soul! and he, who slights it,
Will leave the other dull and lifeless dross.
Sif. No more—you are too warm.
Osm. You are too cool.
Sif. Too cool, my lord? I were indeed too cool,
Not to resent this language, and to tell thee—
I wish earl Osmond were as cool as I
To his own selfish bliss—ay, and as warm
To that of others—But of this no more—
My daughter is thy wife—I gave her to thee,
And will, against all force, maintain her thine.
But think not I will catch thy headlong passions,
Whirled in a blaze of madness o'er the land;
Or, till the last extremity compel me,
Risk the dire means of war—The king, to morrow,
Will set you free; and, if by gentle means,
He does not yield my daughter to your arms,
And wed Constantia, as the will requires,
Why then expect me on the side of justice—
Let that suffice.
Osm. It does—Forgive my heat,
My rankled mind, by injuries inflamed,
May be too prompt to take, and give offence.
Sif. 'Tis past—Your wrongs, I own, may well transport
The wisest mind—But henceforth, noble Osmond,
Do me more justice, honour more my truth,
Nor mark me with an eye of squint suspicion.
These jars apart, you may repose your soul
On my firm faith, and unremitting friendship.
Of that I sure have given exalted proof,
And the next sun we see shall prove it further.
Return, my son, and from your friend Goffredo
Release your word. There try, by soft repose,
To calm your breast.
Osm. Bid the vext ocean sleep,
Swept by the pinions of the raging north——
But your frail age, by care and toil exhausted,
Demands the balm of all repairing rest.
Sif. Soon as to-morrow's dawn shall streak the skies,
I, with my friends, in solemn state assembled,
Will to the palace, and demand your freedom;
Then by calm reason, or by higher means,
The king shall quit his claim, and in the face
Of Sicily, my daughter shall be yours.
Farewell.
Osm. My lord, good night. [*Exit Siffredi.*
[*After a long pause.*] I like him not——
Yes—I have mighty matter of suspicion.
'Tis plain. I see it lurking in his breast;
He has a foolish fondness for this king—
My honour is not safe, while here my wife
Remains—Who knows but he this very night
May bear her to some convent, as he mentioned—
The king too—though I smothered up my rage,
I marked it well—will set me free to-morrow.
Why not to-night? He has some dark design—
By heavens, he has!—I am abused most grossly;
Made the vile tool of this old statesman's schemes;
Married to one—ay, and he knew it—one
Who loves young Tancred! Hence her swooning, tears,
And all her soft distress, when she disgraced me,
By basely giving her perfidious hand
Without her heart—Hell and perdition! this,
This is the perfidy!—this is the fell,
The keen, envenomed, exquisite disgrace,
Which, to a man of honour, even exceeds
The falsehood of the person—But I now
Will rouse me from the poor tame lethargy,
By my believing fondness cast upon me.
I will not wait his crawling timid motions,
Perhaps to blind me meant, which he to-morrow
Has promised to pursue. No! ere his eyes
Shall open on to-morrow's orient beam,
I will convince him that earl Osmond never
Was formed to be his dupe—I know full well
The important weight and danger of the deed;
But to a man, whom greater dangers press,
Driven to the brink of infamy and horror,
Rashness itself, and utter desperation,
Are the best prudence.—I will bear her off
This night, and lodge her in a place of safety:
I have a trusty band that waits not far.
Hence! let me lose no time—One rapid moment

Should ardent form, at once, and execute
A bold design—'Tis fixed—'Tis done!—yes, then,
When I have seized the prize of love and honour,
And with a friend secured her; to the castle
I will repair, and claim Goffredo's promise
To rise with all his garrison—My friends
With brave impatience wait. The mine is laid,
And only wants my kindling touch to spring.
[*Exit Osm.*

SCENE II.—SIGISMUNDA'S *Apartment.—Thunder.*

Enter SIGISMUNDA *and* LAURA.

Laura. Heavens! 'tis a fearful night!
Sig. Ah! the black rage
Of midnight tempest, or the assuring smiles
Of radiant morn, are equal all to me.
Nought now has charms or terrors to my breast,
The seat of stupid woe!—Leave me, my Laura.
Kind rest, perhaps, may hush my woes a little.
Oh, for that quiet sleep that knows no morning!
Laura. Madam, indeed I know not how to go.
Indulge my fondness—Let me watch a while
By your sad bed, 'till these dread hours shall pass.
Sig. Alas! what is the toil of elements,
[*Thunder.*
This idle perturbation of the sky,
To what I feel within?—Oh, that the fires
Of pitying heaven would point their fury here!
Good night, my dearest Laura.
Laura. Oh, I know not
What this oppression means—But 'tis with pain,
With tears, I can persuade myself to leave you—
Well then—Good night, my dearest Sigismunda.
[*Exit.*
Sig. And am I then alone!—The most undone,
Most wretched being now beneath the cope
Of this affrighting gloom that wraps the world—
I said I did not fear—Ah, me! I feel
A shivering horror run through all my powers!
Oh, I am nought but tumult, fears, and weakness!
And yet how idle fear when hope is gone,
Gone, gone for ever!—Oh, thou gentle scene
[*Looking towards her bed.*
Of sweet repose, where, by the oblivious draught
Of each sad toilsome day, to peace restored,
Unhappy mortals lose their woes awhile,
Thou hast no peace for me!—What shall I do?
How pass this dreadful night, so big with terror?—
Here, with the midnight shades, here will I sit,
[*Sitting down.*
A prey to dire despair, and ceaseless weep
The hours away—Bless me—I heard a noise—
[*Starting up.*
No—I mistook—nothing but silence reigns,
And awful midnight round—Again!—Oh, heavens!
My lord the king!

Enter TANCRED.

Tan. Be not alarmed, my love!
Sig. My royal lord, why at this midnight hour,
How came you hither?
Tan. By that secret way
My love contrived, when we, in happier days,
Used to devote these hours, so much in vain,
To vows of love, and everlasting friendship.
Sig. Why will you thus persist to add new stings
To her distress, who never can be thine?
Oh, fly me! fly! you know———
Tan. I know too much.
Oh, how I could reproach thee, Sigismunda!
Pour out my injured soul in just complaints!
But now the time permits not; these swift moments—
I told thee how thy father's artifice
Forced me to seem perfidious in thy eyes.
Ah, fatal blindness! not to have observed
The mingled pangs of rage and love that shook me!
When by the cruel public situation
Compelled, I only feigned consent, to gain
A little time, and more secure thee mine.
E'er since—a dreadful interval of care!
My thoughts have been employed, not without hope,
How to defeat Siffredi's barbarous purpose.
But thy credulity has ruined all;
Thy rash, thy wild—I know not what to name it——
Oh, it has proved the giddy hopes of man
To be delusion all, and sickening folly!
Sig. Ah, generous Tancred! ah, thy truth destroys me!
Yes, yes, 'tis I, 'tis I alone am false!
My hasty rage, joined to my tame submission,
More than the most exalted filial duty
Could e'er demand, has dashed our cup of fate
With bitterness unequalled—But, alas!
What are thy woes to mine?—to mine! just Heaven!
Now is thy turn of vengeance—Hate, renounce me!
Oh, leave me to the fate I well deserve,
To sink in hopeless misery!—at least,
Try to forget the worthless Sigismunda!
Tan. Forget thee! No! Thou art my soul itself!
I have no thought, no hope, no wish but thee!
Even this repented injury, the fears,
That rouse me all to madness, at the thought
Of losing thee, the whole collected pains
Of my full heart, serve but to make thee dearer.
Ah, how forget thee!—Much must be forgot,
Ere Tancred can forget his Sigismunda!
Sig. But you, my lord, must make that great effort.
Tan. Can Sigismunda make it?
Sig. Ah! I know not

With what success—But all that feeble woman,
And love-entangled reason, can perform,
I, to the utmost, will exert to do it.
Tan. Fear not—'Tis done!—If thou canst form the thought,
Success is sure—I am forgot already.
Sig. Ah, Tancred!—But, my lord, respect me more.
Think who I am—What can you now propose?
Tan. To claim the plighted vows which Heaven has heard,
To vindicate the rights of holy love,
By faith and honour bound, to which compared,
These empty forms, which have ensnared thy hand,
Are impious guile, abuse, and profanation——
Nay, as a king, whose high prerogative
By this unlicensed marriage is affronted,
To bid the laws themselves pronounce it void.
Sig. Honour, my lord, is much too proud to catch
At every slender twig of nice distinctions.
These, for the unfeeling vulgar, may do well:
But those, whose souls are by the nicer rule
Of virtuous delicacy nobly swayed,
Stand at another bar than that of laws.
Then cease to urge me—Since I am not born
To that exalted fate to be your queen——
Or, yet a dearer name——to be your wife!——
I am the wife of an illustrious lord,
Of your own princely blood; and what I am,
I will with proper dignity remain.
Retire, my royal lord. There is no means
To cure the wounds this fatal day has given.
We meet no more!
Tan. Oh, barbarous Sigismunda!
And canst thou talk thus steadily? thus treat me
With such unpitying, unrelenting rigour?
Poor is the love, that, rather than give up
A little pride, a little formal pride,
The breath of vanity, can bear to see
The man, whose heart was once so dear to thine,
By many a tender vow so mixed together,
A prey to anguish, fury, and distraction!
Thou canst not surely make me such a wretch;
Thou canst not, Sigismunda!—Yet relent!
Oh, save us yet!—Rodolpho, with my guards,
Waits in the garden—Let us seize the moments,
We ne'er may have again—With more than power
I will assert thee mine, with fairest honour.
The world shall even approve; each honest bosom
Swell with a kindred joy to see us happy.
Sig. The world approve! what is the world to me!
The conscious mind is its own awful world.
And yet, perhaps, if thou wert not a king,
I know not, Tancred, what I might have done.
Then, then, my conduct, sanctified by love,
Could not be deemed, by the severest judge,
The mean effect of interest or ambition.
But now, not all my partial heart can plead,
Shall ever shake the unalterable dictates
That tyrannize my breast.
Tan. 'Tis well—No more—
I yield me to my fate—Yes, yes, inhuman!
Since thy barbarian heart is steeled by pride,
Shut up to love and pity, here behold me
Cast on the ground, a vile and abject wretch!
Lost to all cares, all dignities, all duties!
Here will I grow, breathe out my faithful soul,
Here at thy feet—Death, death alone shall part us!
Sig. Have you then vowed to drive me to perdition!
What can I more?—Yes, Tancred! once again
I will forget the dignity my station
Commands me to sustain—for the last time
Will tell thee, that, I fear, no ties, no duty,
Can ever root thee from my hapless bosom.
Oh, leave me! fly me! were it but in pity!—
To see what once we tenderly have loved,
Cut off from every hope—cut off for ever,
Is pain thy generosity should spare me.
Then rise, my lord; and if you truly love me,
If you respect my honour, nay, my peace,
Retire! for though the emotions of my heart
Can ne'er alarm my virtue; yet, alas!
They tear it so, they pierce it with such anguish—
Oh, 'tis too much!—I cannot bear the conflict!

Enter OSMOND.

Osm. Turn, tyrant, turn! and answer to my honour,
For this thy base insufferable outrage!
Tan. Insolent traitor! think not to escape
Thyself my vengeance!
[*They fight, Osmond falls.*
Sig. Help, here! Help!—Oh, heavens!
[*Throwing herself down by him.*
Alas, my lord, what meant your headlong rage?
That faith, which I this day, upon the altar,
To you devoted, is unblemished, pure
As vestal truth: was resolutely yours,
Beyond the power of aught on earth to shake it.
Osm. Perfidious woman! die!—[*Shortening his sword, he plunges it into her breast.*]
And to the grave attend a husband, yet but half avenged!
Tan. Oh, horror! horror! execrable villain!
Osm. And, tyrant! thou!—thou shalt not o'er my tomb
Exult—'Tis well—'Tis great!—I die content!—
[*Dies.*

Enter RODOLPHO *and* LAURA.

Tan. [*Throwing himself down by Sigismunda.*] Quick! here! bring aid!—All in Palermo bring,
Whose skill can save her!—Ah, that gentle bosom
Pours fast the streams of life.

Sig. All aid is vain;
I feel the powerful hand of death upon me—
But, oh! it sheds a sweetness through my fate,
That I am thine again; and, without blame,
May in my Tancred's arms resign my soul!
Tan. Oh, death is in that voice! so gently mild,
So sadly sweet, as mixes even with mine
The tears of hovering angels!—Mine again!—
And is it thus the cruel fates have joined us?
Are these the horrid nuptials they prepare
For love like ours?—Is virtue thus rewarded?
Let not my impious rage accuse just Heaven!
Thou, Tancred, thou, hast murdered Sigismunda!
That furious man was but the tool of fate,
I, I the cause!—But I will do thee justice
On this deaf heart! that to thy tender wisdom
Refused an ear—Yes, death shall soon unite us.
Sig. Live, live, my Tancred!—Let my death suffice
To expiate all that may have been amiss.
May it appease the fates, avert their fury
From thy propitious reign! Meantime, of me
And of thy glory mindful, live, I charge thee,
To guard our friends, and make thy people happy—

Enter SIFFREDI, *fixed in astonishment and grief.*

My father!——Oh, how shall I lift my eyes
To thee, my sinking father!
Sif. Awful Heaven!
I am chastised——My dearest child!——
Sig. Where am I?
A fearful darkness closes all around—
My friends! We needs must part—I must obey
The impetuous call—Farewell, my Laura! cherish
My poor afflicted father's age—Rodolpho,
Now is the time to watch the unhappy king,
With all the care and tenderness of friendship.
Oh, my dear father, bowed beneath the weight
Of age and grief—the victim even of virtue,
Receive my last adieu!—Where art thou, Tancred?
Give me thy hand—But, ah,—it cannot save me
From the dire king of terrors, whose cold power
Creeps o'er my heart——Oh!
Tan. How these pangs distract me!
Oh, lift thy gracious eyes!——Thou leavs't me, then!
Thou leav'st me, Sigismunda!
Sig. Yet a moment——
I had, my Tancred, something more to say——
Yes——but thy love and tenderness for me,
Sure makes it needless—Harbour no resentment
Against my father; venerate his zeal,
That acted from a principle of goodness,
From faithful love to thee—Live, and maintain
My innocence embalmed, with holiest care
Preserve my spotless memory! Oh——I die——
Eternal mercy take my trembling soul!
Oh, 'tis the only sting of death to part
From those we love—from thee—farewell, my Tancred! [*Dies.*
Tan. Thus then!
[*Flying to his sword, is held by Rodolpho.*
Rod. Hold, hold, my lord!—Have you forgot
Your Sigismunda's last request already?
Tan. Off! set me free! Think not to bind me down,
With barbarous friendship, to the rack of life!
What hand can shut the thousand thousand gates,
Which death still opens to the woes of mortals?—
I shall find means—No power in earth or heaven
Can force me to endure the hateful light,
Thus robbed of all that lent it joy and sweetness!
Off, traitors, off! or my distracted soul
Will burst indignant from this jail of nature,
To where she beckons yonder—No, mild seraph,
Point not to life——I cannot linger here,
Cut off from thee, the miserable pity,
The scorn of humankind!——A trampled king!
Who let his mean poor-hearted love one moment
To coward prudence stoop! who made it not
The first undoubting action of his reign,
To snatch thee to his throne, and there to shield thee,
Thy helpless bosom, from a ruffian's fury!
Oh, shame! Oh, agony! Oh, the fell stings
Of late, of vain repentance!——Ha, my brain
Is all on fire! a wild abyss of thought!
The infernal world discloses! See! Behold him!
Lo! with fierce smiles he shakes the bloody steel,
And mocks my feeble tears.—Hence, quickly, hence!
Spurn his vile carcase! give it to the dogs!
Expose it to the winds and screaming ravens!
Or hurl it down that fiery steep to hell,
There, with his soul, to toss in flames for ever.
Ah, impotence of rage!——
What am I? Where?
Sad, silent all? The forms of dumb despair,
Around some mournful tomb.—What do I see?
This soft abode of innocence and love
Turned to the house of death! a place of horror!——
Ah, that poor corse! pale! pale! deformed with murder!
Is that my Sigismunda?
[*Throws himself down by her.*
Sif. After a pathetic pause, looking on the scene before him.
Have I lived
To these enfeebled years, by heaven reserved
To be a dreadful monument of justice?——
Rodolpho, raise the king, and bear him hence
From this distracting scene of blood and death.
Alas, I dare not give him my assistance;
My care would only more inflame his rage.
Behold the fatal work of my dark hand,
That by rude force the passions would command,

That ruthless thought to root them from the breast;
They may be ruled, but will not be opprest.
Taught hence, ye parents, who from nature stray,
And the great ties of social life betray;
Ne'er with your children act a tyrant's part:
'Tis yours to guide, not violate the heart.
Ye vainly wise, who o'er mankind preside,
Behold my righteous woes, and drop your pride;
Keep virtue's simple path before your eyes,
Nor think from evil good can ever rise.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

IRENE.

BY

JOHNSON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

MAHOMET, *emperor of the Turks.*
CALI BASSA, *first vizier.*
MUSTAPHA, *a Turkish aga.*
ABDALLA, *an officer.*
HASSAN, CARAZA, *Turkish captains.*
DEMETRIUS, LEONTIUS, *Greek noblemen.*
MURZA, *an eunuch.*

WOMEN.

ASPASIA, IRENE, *Greek ladies.*
Attendants on IRENE.

Scene—Turkey.

ACT. I.

SCENE I.

DEMETRIUS *and* LEONTIUS *in Turkish habits.*

Leon. AND is it thus Demetrius meets his friend,
Hid in the mean disguise of Turkish robes,
With servile secrecy to lurk in shades,
And vent our sufferings in clandestine groans?
Dem. Till breathless fury rested from destruction,
These groans were fatal, these disguises vain:
But now our Turkish conquerors have quenched
Their rage, and palled their appetite of murder;
No more the glutted sabre thirsts for blood,
And weary cruelty remits her tortures.
Leon. Yet Greece enjoys no gleam of transient hope,
No soothing interval of peaceful sorrow;
The lust of gold succeeds the rage of conquest,
The lust of gold, unfeeling and remorseless!
The last corruption of degenerate man!
Urged by the imperious soldier's fierce command,
The groaning Greeks break up their golden caverns,
Pregnant with stores, that India's mines might envy,
The accumulated wealth of toiling ages.
Dem. That wealth, too sacred for their country's use!
That wealth, too pleasing to be lost for freedom!
That wealth, which, granted to their weeping prince,
Had ranged embattled nations at our gates—
But thus reserved to lure the wolves of Turkey,
Adds shame to grief, and infamy to ruin.
Lamenting avarice now too late discovers
Her own neglected, in the public safety.
Leon. Reproach not misery.——The sons of Greece,
Ill-fated race! so oft besieged in vain,
With false security beheld invasion.
Why should they fear!—That Power that kindly spreads
The clouds, a signal of impending showers,
To warn the wandering linnet to the shade,
Beheld, without concern, expiring Greece,
And not one prodigy foretold our fate.
Dem. A thousand horrid prodigies foretold it.
A feeble government, eluded laws,

A factious populace, luxurious nobles,
And all the maladies of sinking states.
When public villany, too strong for justice,
Shows his bold front, the harbinger of ruin,
Can brave Leontius call for airy wonders,
Which cheats interpret, and which fools regard?
When some neglected fabric nods beneath
The weight of years, and totters to the tempest,
Must Heaven dispatch the messengers of light,
Or wake the dead to warn us of its fall?

Leon. Well might the weakness of our empire sink
Before such foes of more than human force;
Some power invisible, from Heaven or hell,
Conducts their armies, and asserts their cause.

Dem. And yet, my friend, what miracles were wrought
Beyond the power of constancy and courage?
Did unresisted lightning aid their cannon?
Did roaring whirlwinds sweep us from the ramparts?
'Twas vice that shook our nerves; 'twas vice, Leontius,
That froze our veins, and withered all our powers.

Leon. Whate'er our crimes, our woes demand compassion.
Each night, protected by the friendly darkness,
Quitting my close retreat, I range the city,
And, weeping, kiss the venerable ruins:
With silent pangs I view the towering domes,
Sacred to prayer, and wander through the streets;
Where commerce lavished unexhausted plenty,
And jollity maintained eternal revels.——

Dem. How changed alas!——Now, ghastly desolation
In triumph sits upon our shattered spires;
Now superstition, ignorance, and error,
Usurp our temples, and profane our altars.

Leon. From every palace burst a mingled clamour,
The dreadful dissonance of barbarous triumph,
Shrieks of affright, and wailings of distress.
Oft when the cries of violated beauty
Arose to Heaven, and pierced my bleeding breast,
I felt thy pains, and trembled for Aspasia.

Dem. Aspasia! spare that loved, that mournful name!
Dear hapless maid! tempestuous grief o'erbears
My reasoning powers—Dear, hapless, lost Aspasia!

Leon. Suspend the thought.

Dem. All thought on her is madness:
Yet let me think—I see the helpless maid!
Behold the monsters gaze with savage rapture,
Behold how lust and rapine struggle round her!

Leon. Awake, Demetrius, from this dismal dream;
Sink not beneath imaginary sorrows:
Call to your aid your courage and your wisdom;
Think on the sudden change of human scenes;
Think on the various accidents of war;
Think on the mighty power of awful virtue;
Think on that providence that guards the good.

Dem. O Providence! extend thy care to me,
For courage droops unequal to the combat,
And weak philosophy denies her succours.
Sure some kind sabre, in the heat of battle,
Ere yet the foe found leisure to be cruel,
Dismissed her to the sky.

Leon. Some virgin martyr,
Perhaps, enamoured of resembling virtue,
With gentle hand restrained the streams of life,
And snatched her timely from her country's fate.

Dem. From those bright regions of eternal day,
Where now thou shin'st among thy fellow saints,
Arrayed in purer light, look down on me!
In pleasing visions, and assuasive dreams,
O! soothe my soul, and teach me how to lose thee!

Leon. Enough of unavailing tears, Demetrius:
I came obedient to thy friendly summons,
And hoped to share thy counsels, not thy sorrows:
While thus we mourn the fortune of Aspasia,
To what are we reserved?

Dem. To what I know not:
But hope, yet hope, to happiness and honour—
If happiness can be without Aspasia.

Leon. But whence this new-sprung hope?

Dem. From Cali Bassa:
The chief, whose wisdom guides the Turkish counsels.
He, tired of slavery, though the highest slave,
Projects at once our freedom and his own;
And bids us, thus disguised, await him here.

Leon. Can he restore the state he could not save!
In vain, when Turkey's troops assailed our walls,
His kind intelligence betrayed their measures;
Their arms prevailed, though Cali was our friend.

Dem. When the tenth sun had set upon our sorrows,
At midnight's private hour, a voice unknown
Sounds in my sleeping ear, 'Awake, Demetrius!
'Awake, and follow me to better fortunes.'
Surprized, I start, and bless the happy dream;
Then, rousing, know the fiery chief Abdallah,
Whose quick impatience seized my doubtful hand,
And led me to the shore where Cali stood,
Pensive, and listening to the beating surge.
There, in soft hints, and in ambiguous phrase,
With all the diffidence of long experience,
That oft had practised fraud, and oft detected,
The veteran courtier half revealed his project.

By his command, equipped for speedy flight,
Deep in a winding creek a galley lies,
Manned with the bravest of our fellow captives,
Selected by my care, a hardy band,
That long to hail thee chief.
Leon. But what avails
So small a force? Or why should Cali fly?
Or how can Cali's flight restore our country?
Dem. Reserve these questions for a safer hour,
Or hear himself; for see, the Bassa comes.

Enter CALI BASSA.

Cali. Now summon all thy soul, illustrious Christian!
Awake each faculty that sleeps within thee,
The courtier's policy, the sage's firmness,
The warrior's ardour, and the patriot's zeal;
If chasing past events with vain pursuit,
Or wandering in the wilds of future being,
A single thought now rove, recall it home.
But can thy friend sustain the glorious cause,
The cause of liberty, the cause of nations?
Dem. Observe him closely with a statesman's eye,
Thou, that hast long perused the draughts of nature,
And know'st the characters of vice and virtue,
Left by the hand of heaven on human clay.
Cali. His mien is lofty, his demeanour great;
Nor sprightly folly wantons in his air,
Nor dull serenity becalms his eye.
Such had I trusted once as soon as seen;
But cautious age suspects the flattering form,
And only credits what experience tells.
Has silence pressed her seal upon his lips?
Does adamantine faith invest his heart?
Will he not bend beneath a tyrant's frown?
Will he not melt before ambition's fire?
Will he not soften in a friend's embrace?
Or flow dissolving in a woman's tears?
Dem. Sooner these trembling leaves shall find a voice,
And tell the secrets of their concious walks;
Sooner the breeze shall catch the flying sounds,
And shock the tyrant with a tale of treason.
Your slaughtered multitudes, that swell the shore
With monuments of death, proclaim his courage;
Virtue and liberty engross his soul,
And leave no place for perfidy or fear.
Leon. I scorn a trust unwillingly reposed;
Demetrius will not lead me to dishonour;
Consult in private; call me when your scheme
Is ripe for action, and demands the sword.
[*Going.*
Dem. Leontius, stay.
Cali. Forgive an old man's weakness,
And share the deepest secrets of my soul,
My wrongs, my fears, my motives, my designs—
When unsuccessful wars, and civil factions,
Embroiled the Turkish state——our sultan's father,
Great Amurath, at my request, forsook
The cloister's ease, resumed the tottering throne,
And snatched the reins of abdicated power
From giddy Mahomet's unskilful hand.
This fired the youthful king's ambitious breast;
He murmurs vengeance at the name of Cali,
And dooms my rash fidelity to ruin.
Dem. Unhappy lot of all that shine in courts!
For forced compliance, or for zealous virtue,
Still odious to the monarch or the people.
Cali. Such are the woes, when arbitrary power,
And lawless passion, hold the sword of justice.
If there be any land, as fame reports,
Where common laws restrain the prince and subject,
A happy land, where circulating power
Flows through each member of the embodied state;
Sure, not unconscious of the mighty blessing,
Her grateful sons shine bright with every virtue;
Untainted with the lust of innovation,
Sure all unite to hold her league of rule
Unbroken as the sacred chain of nature,
That links the jarring elements in peace.
Leon. But say, great Bassa, why the Sultan's anger,
Burning in vain, delays the stroke of death?
Cali. Young, and unsettled in his father's kingdoms,
Fierce as he was, he dreaded to destroy
The empire's darling, and the soldier's boast;
But now confirmed, and swelling with his conquests,
Secure he tramples my declining fame,
Frowns unrestrained, and dooms me with his eyes.
Dem. What can reverse thy doom?
Cali. The tyrant's death.
Dem. But Greece is still forgot.
Cali. On Asia's coast,
Which lately blessed my gentle government,
Soon as the sultan's unexpected fate
Fills all the astonished empire with confusion,
My policy shall raise an easy throne;
The Turkish powers from Europe shall retreat,
And harrass Greece no more with wasteful war.
A galley manned with Greeks, thy charge, Leontius,
Attends to waft us to repose and safety.
Dem. That vessel, if observed, alarms the court,
And gives a thousand fatal questions birth;
Why stored for flight? And why prepared by Cali?
Cali. This hour I'll beg, with unsuspecting face,
Leave to perform my pilgrimage to Mecca;
Which, granted, hides my purpose from the world,
And, though refused, conceals it from the sultan.

Leon. How can a single hand attempt a life,
Which armies guard, and citadels inclose?
Cali. Forgetful of command, with captive beauties,
Far from his troops, he toys his hours away.
A roving soldier seized in Sophia's temple
A virgin, shining with distinguished charms,
And brought his beauteous plunder to the sultan.
Dem. In Sophia's temple!—What alarm!—Proceed.
Cali. The sultan gazed, he wondered and he loved;
In passion lost, he bade the conquering fair
Renounce her faith, and be the queen of Turkey;
The pious maid, with modest indignation,
Threw back the glittering bribe.
Dem. Celestial goodness!
It must, it must be she! her name?
Cali. Aspasia.
Dem. What hopes, what terrors rush upon my soul!
O lead me quickly to the scene of fate;
Break through the politician's tedious forms!
Aspasia calls me, let me fly to save her.
Leon. Did Mahomet reproach or praise her virtue?
Cali. His offers oft repeated, still refused,
At length rekindled his accustomed fury,
And changed the endearing smile and amorous whisper
To threats of torture, death and violation.
Dem. These tedious narratives of frozen age
Distract my soul! dispatch thy lingering tale;
Say, did a voice from Heaven restrain the tyrant?
Did interposing angels guard her from him?
Cali. Just in the moment of impending fate,
Another plunderer brought the bright Irene;
Of equal beauty, but of softer mien,
Fear in her eye, submission on her tongue,
Her mournful charms attracted his regards,
Disarmed his rage, and in repeated visits
Gained all his heart; at length his eager love
To her transferred the offer of a crown.
Leon. Nor found again the bright temptation fail?
Cali. Trembling to grant, nor daring to refuse,
While Heaven and Mahomet divide her fears,
With coy caresses and with pleasing wiles
She feeds his hopes, and soothes him to delay.
For her, repose is banished from the night,
And business from the day. In her apartments
He lives———
Leon. And there must fall.
Cali. But yet the attempt
Is hazardous.
Leon. Forbear to speak of hazards!
What has the wretch that has survived his country,
His friends, his liberty, to hazard?
Cali. Life.
Dem. The inestimable privilege of breathing!
Important hazard! What's that airy bubble,
When weighed with Greece, with virtue, with Aspasia?
A floating atom, dust that falls unheeded
Into the adverse scale, nor shakes the balance.
Cali. At least this day be calm——If we succeed,
Aspasia's thine, and all thy life is rapture—
See! Mustapha, the tyrant's minion comes;
Invest Leontius with his new command;
And wait Abdalla's unsuspected visits:
Remember freedom, glory, Greece, and love.
[*Exeunt Demetrius and Leontius.*

Enter MUSTAPHA.

Mus. By what enchantment does this lovely Greek
Hold in her chains the captivated sultan?
He tires his favourites with Irene's praise,
And seek the shades to muse upon Irene;
Irene steals unheeded from his tongue,
And mingles unperceived with every thought.
Cali. Why should the sultan shun the joys of beauty,
Or arm his breast against the force of love?
Love, that with sweet vicissitude relieves
The warrior's labours, and the monarch's cares.
But will she yet receive the faith of Mecca?
Mus. Those powerful tyrants of the female breast,
Fear and ambition, urge her to compliance;
Dressed in each charm of gay magnificence,
Alluring grandeur courts her to his arms;
Religion calls her from the wished embrace,
Paints future joys, and points to distant glories.
Cali. Soon will the unequal contest be decided;
Prospects obscured by distance faintly strike,
Each pleasure brightens at its near approach,
And every danger shocks with double horror.
Must. How shall I scorn the beautiful apostate!
How will the bright Aspasia shine above her!
Cali. Should she, for proselytes are always zealous,
With pious warmth receive our prophet's law—
Must. Heaven will contemn the mercenary fervour,
Which love of greatness, not of truth, inflames.
Cali. Cease, cease thy censures; for the sultan comes
Alone, with amorous haste, to seek his love.

Enter MAHOMET.

Cali. Hail, terror of the monarchs of the world!
Unshaken be thy throne, as earth's firm base,
Live till the sun forgets to dart his beams,
And weary planets loiter in their courses!
Mah. But, Cali, let Irene share thy prayers;
For what is length of days without Irene?
I come from empty noise, and tasteless pomp,
From crowds, that hide a monarch from himself,
To prove the sweets of privacy and friendship,

And dwell upon the beauties of Irene.
Cali. O may her beauties last, unchanged by time,
As those that bless the mansions of the good!
Mah. Each realm, where beauty turns the graceful shape,
Swells the fair breast, or animates the glance,
Adorns my palace with its brightest virgins;
Yet, unacquainted with these soft emotions,
I walked superior, through the blaze of charms,
Praised without rapture, left without regret.
Why rove I now, when absent from my fair,
From solitude to crowds, from crowds to solitude,
Still restless, till I clasp the lovely maid,
And ease my loaded soul upon her bosom?
Mus. Forgive, great sultan, that intrusive duty
Inquires the final doom of Menodorus,
The Grecian counsellor.
Mah. Go, see him die;
His martial rhetoric taught the Greeks resistance;
Had they prevailed, I ne'er had known Irene.
[*Exit Mustapha.*
Remote from tumult, in the adjoining palace,
Thy care shall guard this treasure of my soul;
There let Aspasia, since my fair entreats it,
With converse chase the melancholy moments.
Sure, chilled with six wintry camps, thy blood,
At sight of female charms, will glow no more.
Cali. These years, unconquered Mahomet, demand
Desires more pure, and other cares than love.
Long have I wished, before our prophet's tomb,
To pour my prayers for thy successful reign,
To quit the tumults of the noisy camp,
And sink into the silent grave in peace.
Mah. What! Think of peace while haughty Scanderbeg,
Elate with conquest, in his native mountains,
Prowls o'er the wealthy spoils of bleeding Turkey?
While fair Hungaria's unexhausted vallies
Pour forth their legions, and the roaring Danube
Rolls half his floods, unheard, through shouting camps?
Nor couldst thou more support a life of sloth,
Than Amurath——
Cali. Still full of Amurath! [*Aside.*
Mah. Than Amurath, accustomed to command,
Could bear his son upon the Turkish throne.
Cali. This pilgrimage our lawgiver ordained—
Mah. For those who could not please by nobler service.
Our warlike prophet loves an active faith.
The holy flame of enterprising virtue,
Mocks the dull vows of solitude and penance,
And scorns the lazy hermit's cheap devotion;
Shine thou, distinguished by superior merit,
With wonted zeal pursue the task of war,
Till every nation reverence the Koran,
And every suppliant lift his eyes to Mecca.
Cali. This regal confidence, this pious ardour,
Let prudence moderate, though not suppress.
Is not each realm, that smiles with kinder suns,
Or boasts a happier soil, already thine?
Extended empire, like expanded gold,
Exchanges solid strength for feeble splendour.
Mah. Preach thy dull politics to vulgar kings!
Thou knowest not yet thy master's future greatness,
His vast designs, his plans of boundless power.
When every storm in my domain shall roar,
When every wave shall beat a Turkish shore;
Then, Cali, shall the toils of battle cease,
Then dream of prayer, and pilgrimage, and peace!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT. II.

SCENE I.

Enter ASPASIA *and* IRENE.

Irene. ASPASIA, yet pursue the sacred theme;
Exhaust the stores of pious eloquence,
And teach me to repell the sultan's passion.
Still, at Aspasia's voice, a sudden rapture
Exalts my soul, and fortifies my heart.
The glittering vanities of empty greatness,
The hopes and fears, the joys and pains, of life,
Dissolve in air, and vanish into nothing.
Asp. Let nobler hopes, and juster fears, succeed,
And bar the passes of Irene's mind
Against returning guilt.
Irene. When thou art absent,
Death rises to my view, with all his terrors;
Then visions, horrid as a murderer's dream,
Chill my resolves, and blast my blooming virtue;
Stern torture shakes his bloody scourge before me,
And anguish gnashes on the fatal wheel!
Asp. Since fear predominates in every thought,
And sways thy breast with absolute dominion,
Think on the insulting scorn, the conscious pangs,
The future miseries that wait the apostate;
So shall timidity assist thy reason,
And wisdom into virtue turn thy frailty.
Irene. Will not that power, that formed the heart of woman,
And wove the feeble texture of her nerves,
Forgive those fears that shake the tender frame?
Asp. The weakness we lament, ourselves create.
Instructed from our infant years to court,
With counterfeited fears, the aid of man;
We learn to shudder at the rustling breeze,
Start at the light, and tremble in the dark;
Till, affectation ripening to belief,
And Folly frighted at her own chimeras,
Habitual cowardice usurps the soul.

Irene. Not all like thee can brave the shocks of fate;
Thy soul, by nature great, enlarged by knowledge,
Soars unencumbered with our idle cares,
And all Aspasia, but her beauty, is man.
Asp. Each generous sentiment is thine, Demetrius,
Whose soul, perhaps, yet mindful of Aspasia,
Now hovers o'er this melancholy shade,
Well pleased to find thy precepts not forgotten.
O! could the grave restore the pious hero,
Soon would his art or valour set us free,
And bear us far from servitude and crimes!
Irene. He yet may live.
Asp. Alas! delusive dream!
Too well I know him; his immoderate courage,
The impetuous sallies of excessive virtue,
Too strong for love, have hurried him on death.

Enter CALI *and* ABDALLA.

Cali. [*To Abdalla, as they advance.*] Behold our future sultaness, Abdalla;
Let artful flattery now, to lull suspicion,
Glide through Irene to the sultan's ear.
Wouldst thou subdue the obdurate cannibal
To tender friendship, praise him to his mistress.
[*To Irene.*
Well may those eyes, that view these heavenly charms,
Reject the daughters of contending kings;
For what are pompous titles, proud alliance,
Empire or wealth, to excellence like thine?
Abd. Receive the impatient sultan to thy arms;
And may a long posterity of monarchs,
The pride and terror of succeeding days,
Rise from the happy bed; and future queens
Diffuse Irene's beauty through the world.
Irene. Can Mahomet's imperial hand descend
To clasp a slave? or, can a soul like mine,
Unused to power, and formed for humbler scenes,
Support the splendid miseries of greatness?
Cali. No regal pageant, decked with casual honours,
Scorned by his subjects, trampled by his foes;
No feeble tyrant of a petty state
Courts thee to shake on a dependent throne;
Born to command, as thou to charm mankind,
The sultan from himself derives his greatness.
Observe, bright maid, as his resistless voice
Drives on the tempest of destructive war,
How nation after nation falls before him.
Abd. At his dread name the distant mountains shake
Their cloudy summits, and the sons of fierceness,
That range uncivilized from rock to rock,
Distrust the eternal fortresses of nature,
And wish their gloomy caverns more obscure.
Asp. Forbear this lavish pomp of dreadful praise;
The horrid images of war and slaughter
Renew our sorrows, and awake our fears.
Abd. Cali, methinks yon waving trees afford
A doubtful glimpse of our approaching friends;
Just as I marked them, they forsook the shore,
And turned their hasty steps towards the garden.
Cali. Conduct these queens, Abdalla, to the palace:
Such heavenly beauty, formed for adoration,
The pride of monarchs, the reward of conquest—
Such beauty must not shine to vulgar eyes.
[*Exeunt Abdalla and Aspasia.*
How Heaven, in scorn of human arrogance,
Commits to trivial chance the fate of nations!
While, with incessant thought, laborious man
Extends his mighty schemes of wealth and power,
And towers and triumphs in ideal greatness;
Some accidental gust of opposition
Blasts all the beauties of his new creation,
O'erturns the fabric of presumptuous reason,
And whelms the swelling architect beneath it!
Had not the breeze untwined the meeting boughs,
And through the parted shade disclosed the Greeks,
The important hour had passed unheeded by,
In all the sweet oblivion of delight,
In all the fopperies of meeting lovers;
In sighs and tears, in transports and embraces,
In soft complaints, and idle protestations.

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* LEONTIUS.

Could omens fright the resolute and wise,
Well might we fear impending disappointments.
Leon. Your artful suit, your monarch's fierce denial,
The cruel doom of hapless Menodorus——
Dem. And your new charge, that dear, that heavenly maid.——
Leon. All this we know already from Abdalla.
Dem. Such slight defeats but animate the brave
To stronger efforts, and maturer counsels.
Cali. My doom confirmed establishes my purpose;
Calmly he heard, till Amurath's resumption
Rose to his thought, and set his soul on fire:
When from his lips the fatal name burst out,
A sudden pause the imperfect sense suspended,
Like the dread stillness of condensing storms.
Dem. The loudest cries of nature urge us forward;
Despotic rage pursues the life of Cali;
His groaning country claims Leontius' aid;
And yet another voice—forgive me, Greece—
The powerful voice of love, inflames Demetrius,
Each lingering hour alarms me for Aspasia.
Cali. What passions reign among thy crew, Leontius?
Does cheerless diffidence oppress their hearts?
Or sprightly hope exalt their kindling spirits?
Do they with pain repress the struggling shout,
And listen eager to the rising wind?
Leon. All there is hope, and gaiety, and courage,
No cloudy doubts, or languishing delays;
Ere I could range them on the crowded deck,

At once a hundred voices thundered round me,
And every voice was liberty and Greece.
Dem. Swift, let us rush upon the careless tyrant,
Nor give him leisure for another crime.
Leon. Then let us now resolve, nor idly waste
Another hour in dull deliberation.
Cali. But see, where, destined to protract our counsels,
Comes Mustapha. Your Turkish robes conceal you—
Retire with speed, while I prepare to meet him
With artificial smiles, and seeming friendship.—
[*Exeunt Demetrius and Leontius.*

Enter MUSTAPHA.

I see the gloom, that lowers upon thy brow;
These days of love and pleasure charm not thee;
Too slow these gentle constellations roll;
Thou long'st for stars, that frown on human kind,
And scatter discord from their baleful beams.
Mus. How blest art thou, still jocund and serene,
Beneath the load of business, and of years!
Cali. Sure by some wondrous sympathy of souls
My heart still beats responsive to the sultan's;
I share, by secret instinct, all his joys,
And feel no sorrow, while my sovereign smiles.
Mus. The sultan comes, impatient for his love;
Conduct her hither; let no rude intrusion
Molest these private walks, or care invade
These hours assigned to pleasure and Irene.
[*Exit Cali.*

Enter MAHOMET.

Mah. Now, Mustapha, pursue thy tale of horror.
Has treason's dire infection reached my palace?
Can Cali dare the stroke of heavenly justice,
In the dark precincts of the gaping grave,
And load with perjuries his parting soul?
Was it for this, that, sickening in Epirus,
My father called me to his couch of death,
Joined Cali's hand to mine, and, faltering, cried,
Restrain the fervour of impetuous youth
With venerable Cali's faithful counsels!
Are these the counsels! This the faith of Cali?
Were all our favours lavished on a villain?
Confest?
Mus. Confest by dying Menodorus.
In his last agonies the gasping coward,
Amidst the tortures of the burning steel,
Still fond of life, groaned out the dreadful secret,
Held forth this fatal scroll, then sunk to nothing.
Mah. [*Examining the paper.*] His correspondence with our foes of Greece!
His hand! His seal! The secrets of my soul
Concealed from all but him! All! all conspire
To banish doubt, and brand him for a villain.
Our schemes for ever crossed, our mines discovered,
Betrayed some traitor lurking near my bosom.
Oft have I raged, when their wide-wasting cannon
Lay pointed at our batteries yet unformed,
And broke the meditated lines of war.
Detested Cali too, with artful wonder,
Would shake his wily head, and closely whisper,
Beware of Mustapha, beware of treason.
Mus. The faith of Mustapha disdains suspicion;
But yet, great emperor, beware of treason;
The insidious Bassa, fired by disappointment—
Mah. Shall feel the vengeance of an injured king.
Go, seize him, load him with reproachful chains;
Before the assembled troops proclaim his crimes;
Then leave him stretched upon the lingering rack,
Amidst the camp to howl his life away.
Mus. Should we before the troops proclaim his crimes,
I dread his arts of seeming innocence,
His bland address, and sorcery of tongue;
And should he fall unheard, by sudden justice,
The adoring soldiers would revenge their idol.
Mah. Cali, this day, with hypocritic zeal,
Implored my leave to visit Mecca's temple;
Struck with the wonder of a statesman's goodness,
I raised his thoughts to more sublime devotion.
Now let him go, pursued by silent wrath,
Meet unexpected daggers in his way,
And, in some distant land, obscurely die.
Mus. There will his boundless wealth, the spoil of Asia,
Heaped by your father's ill-placed bounties on him,
Disperse rebellion through the eastern world;
Bribe to his cause and lift beneath his banners
Arabia's roving troops, the sons of swiftness,
And arm the Persian heretic against thee;
There shall he waste thy frontiers, check thy conquests,
And though at length subdued, elude thy vengeance.
Mah. Elude my vengeance! no—my troops shall range
The eternal snows that freeze beyond Meotis,
And Afric's torrid sands, in search of Cali.
Should the fierce North upon his frozen wings
Bear him aloft above the wondering clouds,
And set him in the Pleiad's golden chariots,
Thence should my fury drag him down to tortures;
Wherever guilt can fly, revenge can follow.
Mus. Wilt thou dismiss the savage from the toils,
Only to hunt him round the ravaged world?
Mah. Suspend his sentence——Empire and Irene
Claim my divided soul. This wretch, unworthy
To mix with nobler cares, I'll throw aside
For idle hours, and crush him at my leisure.

Mus. Let not the unbounded greatness of his mind
Betray my king to negligence of danger.
Perhaps the clouds of dark conspiracy
Now roll, full fraught with thunder, o'er your head.
Twice since the morning rose I saw the Bassa,
Like a fell adder, swelling in a brake,
Beneath the covert of this verdant arch,
In private conference; beside him stood
Two men unknown, the partners of his bosom;
I marked them well, and traced in either face
The gloomy resolution, horrid greatness,
And stern composure, of despairing heroes;
And, to confirm my thought, at sight of me,
As blasted by my presence, they withdrew,
With all the speed of terror and of guilt.

Mah. The strong emotions of my troubled soul
Allow no pause for art or for contrivance;
And dark perplexity distracts my counsels.
Do thou resolve: For see, Irene comes!
At her approach, each ruder gust of thought
Sinks, like the sighing of a tempest spent,
And gales of softer passion fan my bosom.

CALI *enters with* IRENE, *and departs with* MUSTAPHA.

Mah. Wilt thou descend, fair daughter of perfection,
To hear my vows, and give mankind a queen?
Ah! cease, Irene, cease those flowing sorrows,
That melt a heart, impregnable till now,
And turn thy thoughts henceforth to love and empire.
How will the matchless beauties of Irene,
Thus bright in tears, thus amiable in ruin,
With all the graceful pride of greatness heightened,
Amidst the blaze of jewels and of gold,
Adorn a throne, and dignify dominion!

Irene. Why all this glare of splendid eloquence,
To paint the pageantries of guilty state?
Must I for these renounce the hope of Heaven,
Immortal crowns, and fulness of enjoyment?

Mah. Vain raptures all—For your inferior natures,
Formed to delight, and happy by delighting,
Heaven has reserved no future paradise,
But bids you rove the paths of bliss, secure
Of total death, and careless of hereafter;
While Heaven's high minister, whose awful volume
Records each act, each thought of sovereign man,
Surveys your plays with inattentive glance,
And leaves the lovely trifler unregarded.

Irene. Why, then, has Nature's vain munificence
Profusely poured her bounties upon woman?
Whence, then, those charms thy tongue has deigned to flatter,
That air resistless, and enchanting blush,
Unless the beauteous fabric was designed
A habitation for a fairer soul?

Mah. Too high, bright maid, thou ratest exterior grace;
Not always do the fairest flowers diffuse
The richest odours, nor the speckled shells
Conceal the gem; let female arrogance
Observe the feathered wanderers of the sky,
With purple varied, and bedrop'd with gold;
They prune the wing, and spread the glossy plumes,
Ordained, like you, to flutter and to shine,
And cheer the weary passenger with music.

Irene. Mean as we are, this tyrant of the world
Implores our smiles, and trembles at our feet:
Whence flow the hopes and fears, despair and rapture,
Whence all the bliss and agonies of love?

Mah. Why, when the balm of sleep descends on man,
Do gay delusions, wandering o'er the brain,
Soothe the delighted soul with empty bliss,
To want give affluence, and to slavery freedom?
Such are love's joys, the lenitives of life,
A fancied treasure, and a waking dream.

Irene. Then let me once, in honour of our sex,
Assume the boastful arrogance of man.
The attractive softness, and the endearing smile,
And powerful glance, 'tis granted, are our own;
Nor has impartial Nature's frugal hand
Exhausted all her nobler gifts on you;
Do not we share the comprehensive thought,
The enlivening wit, the penetrating reason?
Beats not the female breast with generous passions,
The thirst of empire, and the love of glory?

Mah. Illustrious maid! new wonders fix me thine;
Thy soul compleats the triumphs of thy face.
I thought, forgive, my fair! the noblest aim,
The strongest effort of a female soul,
Was but to chuse the graces of the day;
To tune the tongue, to teach the eyes to roll,
Dispose the colours of the flowing robe,
And add new roses to the faded cheek.
Will it not charm a mind, like thine exalted,
To shine the goddess of applauding nations,
To scatter happiness and plenty round thee,
To bid the prostrate captive rise and live,
To see new cities tower at thy command,
And blasted kingdoms flourish at thy smile?

Irene. Charmed with the thought of blessing human kind,
Too calm I listen to the flattering sounds.

Mah. O seize the power to bless—Irene's nod
Shall break the fetters of the groaning Christian;
Greece, in her lovely patroness secure,
Shall mourn no more her plundered palaces.

Irene. Forbear—O do not urge me to my ruin!

Mah. To state and power I court thee, not to ruin:
Smile on my wishes, and command the globe.
Security shall spread her shield before thee,
And love infold thee with his downy wings.

If greatness please thee, mount the imperial seat;
If pleasure charm thee, view this soft retreat;
Here every warbler of the sky shall sing;
Here every fragrance breathe of every spring:
To deck these bowers each region shall combine,
And ev'n our prophet's gardens envy thine:
Empire and love shall share the blissful day,
And varied life steal unperceived away. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

CALI *enters with a discontented air; to him enters* ABDALLA.

Cali. Is this the fierce conspirator, Abdalla?
Is this the restless diligence of treason?
Where hast thou lingered, while the encumbered hours
Fly labouring with the fate of future nations,
And hungry slaughter scents imperial blood?
Abd. Important cares detained me from your counsels.
Cali. Some petty passion, some domestic trifle,
Some vain amusement of a vacant soul;
A weeping wife, perhaps, or dying friend,
Hung on your neck, and hindered your departure.
Is this a time for softness or for sorrow?
Unprofitable, peaceful, female virtues?
When eager vengeance shows a naked foe,
And kind ambition points the way to greatness?
Abd. Must then ambition's votaries infringe
The laws of kindness, break the bonds of nature?
And quit the names of brother, friend, and father?
Cali. This sovereign passion, scornful of restraint,
Ev'n from the birth affects supreme command,
Swells in the breast, and, with resistless force,
O'erbears each gentler motion of the mind;
As, when a deluge overspreads the plains,
The wandering rivulet, and silver lake,
Mix undistinguished with the general roar.
Abd. Yet can ambition in Abdalla's breast
Claim but the second place: there mighty love
Has fixed his hopes, inquietudes, and fears,
His glowing wishes, and his jealous pangs.
Cali. Love is indeed the privilege of youth;
Yet, on a day like this, when expectation
Pants for the dread event—But let us reason—
Abd. Hast thou grown old amidst the crowd of courts,
And turned the instructive page of human life,
To cant, at last, of reason to a lover?
Such ill-timed gravity, such serious folly,
Might well befit the solitary student,
The unpractised dervise, or sequestered faquir.
Know'st thou not yet, when love invades the soul,
That all her faculties receive his chains?
That reason gives her scepter to his hand,
Or only struggles to be more enslaved?
Aspasia! who can look upon thy beauties,
Who hear thee speak, and not abandon reason?
Reason! the hoary dotard's dull directress,
That loses all because she hazards nothing:
Reason! the timorous pilot, that to shun
The rocks of life, for ever flies the port.
Cali. But why this sudden warmth?
Abd. Because I love:
Because my slighted passion burns in vain!
Why roars the lioness distressed by hunger?
Why foam the swelling waves when tempests rise?
Why shakes the ground, when subterraneous fires
Fierce through the bursting caverns rend their way?
Cali. Not till this day thou saw'st this fatal fair;
Did ever passion make so swift a progress?
Once more reflect, suppress this infant folly.
Abd. Gross fires, enkindled by a mortal hand,
Spread by degrees, and dread the oppressing stream;
The subtler flames, emitted from the sky,
Flash out at once, with strength above resistance.
Cali. How did Aspasia welcome your address?
Did you proclaim this unexpected conquest?
Or pay with speaking eyes a lover's homage?
Abd. Confounded, awed, and lost in admiration,
I gazed, I trembled; but I could not speak:
When, even as love was breaking off from wonder,
And tender accents quivered on my lips,
She marked my sparkling eyes, and heaving breast,
And smiling, conscious of her charms, withdrew.
Cali. Now be some moments master of thyself,
Nor let Demetrius know thee for a rival.
Hence! or be calm—To disagree is ruin.

Enter DEMETRIUS, LEONTIUS.

Dem. When will occasion smile upon our wishes,
And give the tortures of suspense a period?
Still must we linger in uncertain hope?
Still languish in our chains, and dream of freedom,
Like thirsty sailors gazing on the clouds,
Till burning death shoots through their withered limbs?
Cali. Deliverance is at hand; for Turkey's tyrant,
Sunk in his pleasure, confident and gay,
With all the hero's dull security,
Trusts to my care his mistress and his life,
And laughs and wantons in the jaws of death.
Leon. So weak is man, when destined to destruction,
The watchful slumber, and the crafty trust.

Cali. At my command yon iron gates unfold;
At my command the sentinels retire;
With all the licence of authority,
Through bowing slaves, I range the private rooms,
And of to-morrow's action fix the scene.
Dem. To-morrow's action? Can that hoary wisdom,
Borne down with years, still doat upon to-morrow?
That fatal mistress of the young, the lazy,
The coward, and the fool condemned to lose
An useless life in waiting for to-morrow,
To gaze with longing eyes upon to-morrow,
Till interposing death destroys the prospect!
Strange! that this general fraud from day to day
Should fill the world with wretches undetected.
The soldier, labouring through a winter's march,
Still sees to-morrow drest in robes of triumph;
Still to the lover's long-expecting arms,
To-morrow brings the visionary bride;
But thou, too old to bear another cheat,
Learn, that the present hour alone is man's.
Leon. The present hour with open arms invites;
Seize the kind fair, and press her to thy bosom.
Dem. Who knows, ere this important morrow rise,
But fear, or mutiny may taint the Greeks?
Who knows if Mahomet's awaking anger
May spare the fatal bow-string till to-morrow?
Abd. Had our first Asian foes but known this ardour,
We still had wandered on Tartarian hills.
Rouse, Cali! shall the sons of conquered Greece
Lead us to danger, and abash their victors?
This night with all her conscious stars be witness
Who merits most, Demetrius or Abdalla.
Dem. Who merits most!—I knew not we were rivals.
Cali. Young man, forbear—The heat of youth, no more—
Well—'tis decreed—This night shall fix our fate.
Soon as the veil of evening clouds the sky,
With cautious secrecy, Leontius, steer
The appointed vessel to yon shaded bay,
Formed by this garden on the shaded deep;
There, with your soldiers armed, and sails expanded,
Await our coming, equally prepared
For speedy flight, or obstinate defence.
[*Exit Leontius.*
Dem. Now pause, great Bassa, from the thoughts of blood,
And kindly grant an ear to gentler sounds!
If e'er thy youth has known the pangs of absence,
Or felt the importance of obstructed love,
Give me, before the approaching hour of fate,
Once to behold the charms of bright Aspasia,
And draw new virtue from her heavenly tongue.
Cali. Let prudence, ere the suit be further urged,
Impartial weigh the pleasure with the danger.
A little longer, and she's thine for ever.
Dem. Prudence and love conspire in this request,
Lest, unacquainted with our bold attempt,
Surprize o'erwhelm her, and retard our flight.
Cali. What I can grant, you cannot ask in vain—
Dem. I go to wait thy call; this kind consent
Completes the gift of freedom and of life.
[*Exit Demetrius.*
Abd. And this is my reward—to burn, to languish,
To rave unheeded, while the happy Greek,
The refuse of our swords, the dross of conquest,
Throws his fond arms about Aspasia's neck,
Dwells on her lips, and sighs upon her breast;
Is't not enough, he lives by our indulgence,
But he must live to make his masters wretched!
Cali. What claim hast thou to plead?
Abd. The claim of power,
The unquestioned claim of conquerors and kings!
Cali. Yet, in the use of power, remember justice.
Abd. Can then the assassin lift his treacherous hand
Against his king, and cry, Remember justice?
Justice demands the forfeit life of Cali;
Justice demands—But see the approaching sultan.
Oppose my wishes, and—Remember justice.
Cali. Disorder sits upon thy face—retire.
[*Exit Abdalla.*

Enter MAHOMET.

Long be the sultan blessed with happy love!
My zeal marks gladness dawning on thy cheek,
With raptures such as fire the pagan crowds,
When pale, and anxious for their years to come,
They see the sun surmount the dark eclipse,
And hail unanimous their conquering god.
Mah. My vows, 'tis true, she hears with less aversion;
She sighs, she blushes, but she still denies.
Cali. With warmer courtship press the yielding fair,
Call to your aid, with boundless promises,
Each rebel wish, each traitor inclination,
That raises tumults in the female breast,
The love of power, of pleasure, and of show.
Mah. These arts I tried, and, to inflame her more,
By hateful business hurried from her sight,
I bade a hundred virgins wait around her,
Soothe her with all the pleasures of command,
Applaud her charms, and court her to be great.
[*Exit Mahomet.*
Cali. He's gone—Here rest, my soul, thy fainting wing,
Here recollect thy dissipated powers.
Our distant interests, and our different passions
Now haste to mingle in one common centre,
And fate lies crowded in a narrow space.

Yet in that narrow space what dangers rise?—
Far more I dread Abdalla's fiery folly,
Than all the wisdom of the grave divan.
Reason with reason fights on equal terms;
The raging madman's unconnected schemes
We cannot obviate, for we cannot guess.
Deep in my breast be treasured this resolve,
When Cali mounts the throne Abdalla dies!
Too fierce, too faithless for neglect or trust.—

Enter IRENE, *and* ASPASIA, *with attendants.*

Amidst the splendour of encircling beauty,
Superior majesty proclaims the queen,
And nature justifies our monarch's choice.
Irene. Reserve this homage for some other fair;
Urge me not on to glittering guilt, nor pour
In my weak ear the intoxicating sounds.
Cali. Make haste, bright maid, to rule the willing world;
Awed by the rigour of the sultan's justice,
We court thy gentleness.
Asp. Can Cali's voice
Concur to press a hapless captive's ruin?
Cali. Long would my zeal for Mahomet and thee
Detain me here. But nations call upon me,
And duty bids me choose a distant walk,
Nor taint with care the privacies of love.
[*Exit Cali.*
Asp. If yet this shining pomp, these sudden honours,
Swell not thy soul beyond advice or friendship,
Not yet inspire the follies of a queen,
Or tune thine ear to soothing adulation,
Suspend awhile the privilege of power,
To hear the voice of truth; dismiss thy train,
Shake off the incumbrances of state a moment,
And lay the towering sultaness aside,
[*Irene signs to her attendants to retire.*
While I foretell thy fate; that office done—
No more I boast the ambitious name of friend,
But sink among thy slaves without a murmur.
Irene. Did regal diadems invest my brow,
Yet should my soul, still faithful to her choice,
Esteem Aspasia's breast the noblest kingdom.
Asp. The soul, once tainted with so foul a crime,
No more shall glow with friendship's hallowed ardour:
Those holy beings, whose superior care
Guides erring mortals to the paths of virtue,
Affrighted at impiety like thine,
Resign their charge to baseness and to ruin.
Irene. Upbraid me not with fancied wickedness;
I am not yet a queen, or an apostate.
But should I sin beyond the hope of mercy,
If, when religion prompts me to refuse,
The dread of instant death restrains my tongue!
Asp. Reflect, that life and death, affecting sounds!
Are only varied modes of endless being:
Reflect that life, like every other blessing,
Derives its value from its use alone;
Not for itself, but for a nobler end,
The Eternal gave it—and that end is virtue.
When inconsistent with a greater good,
Reason commands to cast the less away:
Thus life, with loss of wealth, is well preserved,
And virtue cheaply saved with loss of life.
Irene. If, built on settled thought, this constancy
Not idly flutters on a boastful tongue,
Why, when destruction raged around our walls,
Why fled this haughty heroine from the battle?
Why, then, did not this warlike amazon
Mix in the war, and shine among the heroes?
Asp. Heaven, when its hand poured softness on our limbs
Unfit for toil, and polished into weakness,
Made passive fortitude the praise of women:
Our only arms are innocence and meekness.
Not then with raving cries I filled the city,
But, while Demetrius, dear lamented name!
Poured storms of fire upon our fierce invaders,
Implored the eternal Power to shield my country,
With silent sorrows, and with calm devotion.
Irene. Oh! did Irene shine the queen of Turkey,
No more should Greece lament those prayers rejected!
Again should golden splendour grace her cities,
Again her prostrate palaces should rise,
Again her temples sound with holy music:
No more should danger fright, or want distress,
The smiling widows, and protected orphans.
Asp. Be virtuous ends pursued by virtuous means;
Nor think the intention sanctifies the deed:
That maxim, published in an impious age,
Would loose the wild enthusiast to destroy,
And fix the fierce usurper's bloody title.
Then bigotry might send her slaves to war,
And bid success become the test of truth.
Unpitying massacre might waste the world,
And persecution boast the call of Heaven.
Irene. Shall I not wish to cheer afflicted kings,
And plan the happiness of mourning millions?
Asp. Dream not of power thou canst not attain:
When social laws first harmonized the world,
Superior man possessed the charge of rule,
The scale of justice, and the sword of power,
Nor left us aught but flattery and state.
Irene. To me, my lover's fondness will restore
Whate'er man's pride has ravished from our sex.
Asp. When soft security shall prompt the sultan,
Freed from the tumults of unsettled conquest,
To fix his court, and regulate his pleasures,
Soon shall the dire seraglio's horrid gates
Close, like the eternal bars of death, upon thee:
Immured, and buried in perpetual sloth,
That gloomy slumber of the stagnant soul,

There shalt thou view, from far, the quiet cottage,
And sigh for cheerful poverty in vain;
There wear the tedious hours of life away,
Beneath each curse of unrelenting Heaven,
Despair, and slavery, solitude, and guilt!
Irene. There shall we find the yet untasted bliss,
Of grandeur and tranquillity combined.
Asp. Tranquillity and guilt, disjoined by Heaven,
Still stretch, in vain, their longing arms afar,
Nor dare to pass the insuperable bound;
Ah! let me rather seek the convent's cell;
There, when my thoughts, at interval of prayer,
Descend to range these mansions of misfortune,
Oft shall I dwell on our disastrous friendship,
And shed the pitying tear for lost Irene.
Irene. Go, languish on in dull obscurity!
Thy dazzled soul, with all its boasted greatness,
Shrinks at the o'erpowering gleams of regal state,
Stoops from the blaze, like a degenerate eagle,
And flies for shelter to the shades of life.
Asp. On me should Providence, without a crime,
The weighty charge of royalty confer;
Call me to civilize the Russian wilds,
Or bid soft science polish Briton's heroes:
Soon shouldst thou see, how false thy weak reproach.
My bosom feels, enkindled from the sky,
The lambent flames of mild benevolence,
Untouched by fierce ambition's raging fires.
Irene. Ambition is the stamp, impressed by Heaven,
To mark the noblest minds; with active heat
Informed, they mount the precipice of power,
Grasp at command, and tower in quest of empire;
While vulgar souls compassionate their cares,
Gaze at their height, and tremble at their danger:
Thus meaner spirits, with amazement, mark
The varying seasons, and revolving skies,
And ask, what guilty power's rebellious hand
Rolls, with eternal toil, the ponderous orbs;
While some archangel, nearer to perfection,
In easy state, presides o'er all their motions,
Directs the planets with a careless nod,
Conducts the sun, and regulates the spheres.
Asp. Well mayest thou hide, in labyrinths of sound,
The cause that shrinks from reason's powerful voice.
Stoop from thy flight, trace back the entangled thought,
And set the glittering fallacy to view.
Not power I blame, but power obtained by crime.
Angelic greatness is angelic virtue.
Amidst the glare of courts, the shout of armies,
Will not the apostate feel the pangs of guilt,
And wish, too late, for innocence and peace?
Curst as the tyrant of the infernal realms,
With gloomy state, and agonizing pomp!

Enter a Maid.

Maid. A Turkish stranger, of majestic mien,
Asks, at the gate, admission to Aspasia,
Commissioned, as he says, by Cali Bassa.
Irene. Whoe'er thou art, or whatsoe'er thy message,
Thanks for this kind relief—[*Aside.*]—with speed admit him.
Asp. He comes, perhaps, to separate us for ever:
When I am gone, remember, Oh! remember
That none are great, or happy, but the virtuous!
[*Exit Irene.*

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. 'Tis she—my hope, my happiness, my love!
Aspasia! Do I once again behold thee?
Still, still the same—unclouded by misfortune!
Let my blest eyes for ever gaze——
Asp. Demetrius!
Dem. Why does the blood forsake thy lovely cheek?
Why shoots this chillness through thy shaking nerves?
Why does thy soul retire into herself?
Recline upon my breast thy sinking beauties:
Revive—revive to freedom and to love!
Asp. What well known voice pronounced the grateful sounds,
Freedom and love? Alas! I'm all confusion;
A sudden mist o'ercasts my darkened soul;
The present, past, and future, swim before me,
Lost in a wild perplexity of joy.
Dem. Such ecstacy of love, such pure affection,
What worth can merit, or what faith reward?
Asp. A thousand thoughts, imperfect and distracted,
Demand a voice, and struggle into birth;
A thousand questions press upon my tongue,
But all give way to rapture and Demetrius!
Dem. O say, bright being! in this age of absence,
What fears, what griefs, what dangers hast thou known?
Say, how the tyrant threatened, flattered, sighed,
Say, how he threatened, flattered, sighed in vain!
Say, how the hand of violence was raised,
Say, how thou calledst in tears upon Demetrius!
Asp. Inform me, rather, how thy happy courage
Stemmed in the breach the deluge of destruction,
And passed uninjured through the walks of death?
Did savage anger and licentious conquest
Behold the hero with Aspasia's eyes?
And, thus protected in the general ruin,
O say, what guardian power conveyed thee hither!
Dem. Such strange events, such unexpected chances,
Beyond my warmest hope, or wildest wishes,
Concurred to give me to Aspasia's arms,
I stand amazed, and ask, if yet I clasp thee.

†

Asp. Sure Heaven (for wonders are not wrought in vain),
That joins us thus, will never part us more.

Enter ABDALLA.

Abd. It parts you now—the hasty sultan signed
The laws unread, and flies to his Irene.
Dem. Fixed and intent on his Irene's charms,
He envies none the converse of Aspasia.
Abd. Aspasia's absence will inflame suspicion;
She cannot, must not, shall not linger here,
Prudence and friendship bid me force her from you.
Dem. Force her! profane her with a touch, and die!
Abd. 'Tis Greece, 'tis freedom calls Aspasia hence;
Your careless love betrays your country's cause.
Dem. If we must part——
Asp. No! let us die together.
Dem. If we must part——
Abd. Dispatch! the encreasing danger
Will not admit a lover's long farewell,
The long drawn intercourse of sighs and kisses.
Dem. Then——O my fair, I cannot bid thee go;
Receive her, and protect her, gracious Heaven!
Yet let me watch her dear departing steps,
If fate pursues me, let it find me here.
Reproach not Greece, a lover's fond delays,
Nor think thy cause neglected while I gaze;
New force, new courage, from each glance I gain,
And find our passions not infused in vain. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter DEMETRIUS *and* ASPASIA.

Asp. ENOUGH——resistless reason calms my soul——
Approving justice smiles upon your cause,
And nature's rights entreat the asserting sword.
Yet when your hand is lifted to destroy,
Think—but excuse a woman's needless caution—
Purge well thy mind from every private passion.
Drive interest, love, and vengeance from thy thoughts,
Fill all thy ardent breast with Greece and virtue!
Then strike secure, and heaven assist the blow!
Dem. Thou kind assistant of my better angel,
Propitious guide of my bewildered soul,
Calm of my cares, and guardian of my virtue!
Asp. My soul, first kindled by thy bright example,
To noble thought and generous emulation,
Now but reflects those beams that flowed from thee.
Dem. With native lustre, and unborrowed greatness,
Thou shin'st, bright maid, superior to distress;
Unlike the trifling race of vulgar beauties,
Those glittering dew-drops of a vernal morn,
That spread their colours to the genial beam,
And, sparkling, quiver to the breath of May;
But when the tempest, with sonorous wing,
Sweeps o'er the grove, forsake the labouring bough,
Dispersed in air, or mingled with the dust.
Asp. Forbear this triumph—still new conflicts wait us,
Foes unforeseen, and dangers unsuspected.
Oft, when the fierce besieger's eager host
Beholds the fainting garrison retire,
And rushes joyful to the naked wall,
Destruction flashes from the insidious mine,
And sweeps the exulting conqueror away:
Perhaps in vain the sultan's anger spared me,
To find a meaner fate from treacherous friendship—
Abdalla—
Dem. Can Abdalla then dissemble?
That fiery chief, renowned for generous freedom,
For zeal unguarded, undissembled hate,
For daring truth, and turbulence of honour?
Asp. This open friend, this undesigning hero,
With noisy falsehoods forced me from your arms,
To shock my virtue with a tale of love.
Dem. Did not the cause of Greece restrain my sword,
Aspasia should not fear a second insult.
Asp. His pride and love by turns inspired his tongue,
And intermixed my praises with his own;
His wealth, his rank, his honours he recounted,
Till, in the midst of arrogance and fondness,
The approaching sultan forc'd me from the palace;
Then while he gazed upon his yielding mistress,
I stole, unheeded, from their ravished eyes,
And sought this happy grove in quest of thee.
Dem. Soon may the final stroke decide our fate,
Lest baneful discord crush our infant scheme,
And strangled freedom perish in the birth.
Asp. My bosom harassed with alternate passions,
Now hopes, now fears——
Dem. The anxieties of love!
Asp. Think how the sovereign arbiter of kingdoms
Detests thy false associates' black designs,
And frowns on perjury, revenge, and murder.
Embarked with treason on the seas of fate,
When Heaven shall bid the swelling billows rage,
And point vindictive lightnings at rebellion,
Will not the patriot share the traitor's danger?
Oh, could thy hand, unaided, free thy country,
Nor mingled guilt pollute the sacred cause!

Dem. Permitted oft, though not inspired by Heaven,
Successful treasons punish impious kings.
Asp. Nor end my terrors with the sultan's death;
Far as futurity's untravelled waste
Lies open to conjecture's dubious ken,
On every side confusion, rage, and death,
Perhaps the phantoms of a woman's fear,
Beset the treacherous way with fatal ambush;
Each Turkish bosom burns for thy destruction;
Ambitious Cali dreads the statesman's arts,
And hot Abdalla hates the happy lover.
Dem. Capricious man! to good and ill inconstant;
Too much to fear or trust, is equal weakness.
Sometimes the wretch, unawed by heaven or hell,
With mad devotion idolizes honour.
The Bassa, reeking with his master's murder,
Perhaps may start at violated friendship.
Asp. How soon, alas! will interest, fear, or envy,
O'erthrow such weak, such accidental virtue,
Nor built on faith, nor fortified by conscience?
Dem. When desperate ills demand a speedy cure,
Distrust is cowardice, and prudence folly.
Asp. Yet think a moment, ere you court destruction,
What hand, when death has snatched away Demetrius,
Shall guard Aspasia from triumphant lust!
Dem. Dismiss these needless fears—a troop of Greeks,
Well known, long tried, expect us on the shore.
Borne on the surface of the smiling deep,
Soon shalt thou scorn, in safety's arms reposed,
Abdalla's rage and Cali's stratagems.
Asp. Still, still distrust sits heavy on my heart.
Will e'er an happier hour revisit Greece!
Dem. Should Heaven, yet unappeased, refuse its aid,
Disperse our hopes, and frustrate our designs,
Yet shall the conscience of the great attempt
Diffuse a brightness on our future days;
Nor will his country's groans reproach Demetrius.
But how canst thou support the woes of exile?
Canst thou forget hereditary splendours,
To live obscure upon a foreign coast,
Content with science, innocence, and love?
Asp. Nor wealth, nor titles, make Aspasia's bliss.
O'erwhelmed and lost amidst the public ruins,
Unmoved I saw the glittering trifles perish,
And thought the petty dross beneath a sigh.
Chearful I follow to the rural cell;
Love be my wealth, and my distinction virtue!
Dem. Submissive and prepared for each event,
Now let us wait the last award of Heaven,
Secure of happiness from flight or conquest,
Nor fear the fair and learned can want protection.
The mighty Tuscan courts the banished arts
To kind Italia's hospitable shades;
There shall soft leisure wing the excursive soul,
And peace propitious smile on fond desire;
There shall despotic eloquence resume
Her ancient empire o'er the yielding heart;
There poetry shall tune her sacred voice,
And wake from ignorance the western world.

Enter CALI.

Cali. At length the unwilling sun resigns the world
To silence and to rest. The hours of darkness,
Propitious hours to stratagem and death!
Pursue the last remains of lingering light.
Dem. Count not these hours as parts of vulgar time;
Think them a sacred treasure lent by Heaven,
Which, squandered by neglect, or fear, or folly,
No prayer recalls, no diligence redeems;
To-morrow's dawn shall see the Turkish king
Stretched in the dust, or towering on his throne;
To-morrow's dawn shall see the mighty Cali,
The sport of tyranny, or lord of nations.
Cali. Then waste no longer these important moments
In soft endearments, and in gentle murmurs;
Nor lose in love the patriot and the hero.
Dem. 'Tis love combined with guilt alone, that melts
The softened soul to cowardice and sloth;
But virtuous passion prompts the great resolve,
And fans the slumbering spark of heavenly fire.
Retire, my fair; that power, that smiles on goodness
Guide all thy steps, calm every stormy thought,
And still thy bosom with the voice of peace!
Asp. Soon may we meet again, secure and free,
To feel no more the pangs of separation! [*Exit.*
Dem. This night alone is ours—Our mighty foe,
No longer lost in amorous solitude,
Will now remount the slighted seat of empire,
And show Irene to the shouting people:
Aspasia left her sighing in his arms,
And listening to the pleasing tale of power;
With softened voice she dropped the faint refusal,
Smiling consent she sat, and blushing love.
Cali. Now, tyrant, with satiety of beauty,
Now feast thine eyes, thine eyes that ne'er hereafter
Shall dart their amorous glances at the fair,
Or glare on Cali with malignant beams!

Enter LEONTIUS, ABDALLA.

Leon. Our bark, unseen, has reached the appointed bay,
And where yon trees wave o'er the foaming surge
Reclines against the shore: Our Grecian troop

Extends its lines along the sandy beach,
Elate with hope, and panting for a foe.
Abd. The favouring winds assist the great design,
Sport in our sails, and murmur o'er the deep.
Cali. 'Tis well—A single blow completes our wishes:
Return with speed, Leontius, to your charge;
The Greeks, disordered by their leader's absence,
May droop dismayed, or kindle into madness.
Leon. Suspected still?—What villain's poisnous tongue
Dares join Leontius' name with fear or falsehood?
Have I, for this, preserved my guiltless bosom,
Pure as the thoughts of infant innocence?
Have I, for this, defied the chiefs of Turkey,
Intrepid in the flaming front of war?
Cali. Hast thou not searched my soul's profoundest thoughts?
Is not the fate of Greece and Cali thine?
Leon. Why has thy choice then pointed out Leontius,
Unfit to share this night's illustrious toils?
To wait remote from action, and from honour,
An idle list'ner to the distant cries
Of slaughtered infidels, and clash of swords!
Tell me the cause, that while thy name, Demetrius,
Shall soar triumphant on the wings of glory,
Despised and cursed, Leontius must descend
Through hissing ages, a proverbial coward,
The tale of women, and the scorn of fools?
Dem. Can brave Leontius be the slave of glory?
Glory, the casual gift of thoughtless crouds!
Glory, the bribe of avaricious virtue!
Be but my country free, be thine the praise;
I ask no witness, but attesting conscience,
No records, but the records of the sky.
Leon. Wilt thou, then, head the troop upon the shore,
While I destroy the oppressor of mankind?
Dem. What canst thou boast superior to Demetrius?
Ask to whose sword the Greeks will trust their cause,
My name shall echo through the shouting field;
Demand whose force yon Turkish heroes dread,
The shuddering camp shall murmur out Demetrius.
Cali. Must Greece, still wretched by her children's folly,
For ever mourn their avarice or factions?
Demetrius justly pleads a double title;
The lover's interest aids the patriot's claim.
Leon. My pride shall ne'er protract my country's woes;
Succeed, my friend, unenvied by Leontius.
Dem. I feel new spirit shoot along my nerves,
My soul expands to meet approaching freedom.
Now hover o'er us with propitious wings,
Ye sacred shades of patriots and of martyrs;
All ye, whose blood tyrannic rage effused,
Or persecution drank, attend our call;
And from the mansions of perpetual peace
Descend, to sweeten labours once your own!
Cali. Go, then, and with united eloquence
Confirm your troops; and when the moon's fair beam
Plays on the quivering waves, to guide our flight,
Return, Demetrius, and be free for ever.
[*Exeunt Dem. and Leon.*
Abd. How the new monarch, swelled with airy rule,
Looks down, contemptuous, from his fancied height,
And utters fate, unmindful of Abdalla!
Cali. Far be such black ingratitude from Cali!
When Asia's nations own me for their lord,
Wealth, and command, and grandeur shall be thine.
Abd. Is this the recompence reserved for me?
Dar'st thou thus dally with Abdalla's passion?
Henceforward, hope no more my slighted friendship,
Wake from thy dream of power to death and tortures,
And bid thy visionary throne farewell!
Cali. Name and enjoy thy wish——
Abd. I need not name it;
Aspasia's lovers know but one desire,
Nor hope, nor wish, nor live but for Aspasia.
Cali. That fatal beauty, plighted to Demetrius,
Heaven makes not mine to give.
Abd. Nor to deny.
Cali. Obtain her and possess; thou know'st thy rival.
Abd. Too well I know him, since on Thracia's plains
I felt the force of his tempestuous arm,
And saw my scattered squadrons fly before him.
Nor will I trust the uncertain chance of combat;
The rights of princes let the sword decide,
The petty claims of empire and of honour:
Revenge and subtle jealousy shall teach
A surer passage to his hated heart.
Cali. O spare the gallant Greek! in him we lose
The politician's arts, and hero's flame.
Abd. When next we meet before we storm the palace,
The bowl shall circle to confirm our league;
Then shall these juices taint Demetrius' draught,
[*Shewing a phial.*
And stream destructive through his freezing veins.
Thus shall he live to strike the important blow,
And perish ere he tastes the joys of conquest.

Enter MAHOMET *and* MUSTAPHA.

Mah. Henceforth for ever happy be this day,
Sacred to love, to pleasure, and Irene:

The matchless fair has blessed me with compliance;
Let every tongue resound Irene's praise,
And spread the general transport through mankind!
Cali. Blest prince, for whom indulgent Heaven ordains
At once the joys of paradise and empire,
Now join thy people's, and thy Cali's prayers!
Suspend thy passage to the seats of bliss,
Nor wish for houries in Irene's arms.
Mah. Forbear—I know the long tried faith of Cali.
Cali. O could the eyes of kings, like those of Heaven,
Search to the dark recesses of the soul,
Oft would they find ingratitude and treason,
By smiles, and oaths, and praises ill disguised.
How rarely would they meet, in crowded courts,
Fidelity so firm, so pure, as mine!
Mus. Yet ere we give our loosened thoughts to rapture,
Let prudence obviate an impending danger.
Tainted by sloth, the parent of sedition,
The hungry janizary burns for plunder,
And growls in private o'er his idle sabre.
Mah. To still their murmurs, ere the twentieth sun
Shall shed his beams upon the bridal bed,
I rouse to war, and conquer for Irene.
Then shall the Rhodian mourn his sinking towers,
And Buda fall, and proud Vienna tremble;
Then shall Venetia feel the Turkish power,
And subject seas roar round their queen in vain.
Abd. Then seize fair Italy's delightful coast,
To fix your standard in imperial Rome.
Mah. Her sons malicious clemency shall spare,
To form new legions, sanctify new crimes,
To canonize the slaves of superstition,
And fill the world with follies and impostures,
Till angry Heaven shall mark them out for ruin,
And war o'erwhelm them in their dream of vice.
O could her fabled saints, and boasted prayers,
Call forth her ancient heroes to the field,
How should I joy, midst the fierce shock of nations,
To cross the towerings of an equal soul,
And bid the master genius rule the world!
Abdalla, Cali, go—proclaim my purpose.
[*Exeunt Cali and Abdalla.*
Still Cali lives; and must he live to-morrow?
That fawning villain's forced congratulations
Will cloud my triumphs, and pollute the day.
Mus. With cautious vigilance, at my command,
Two faithful captains, Hassan and Caraza,
Pursue him through his labyrinths of treason,
And wait your summons to report his conduct.
Mah. Call them, but let them not prolong their tale,
Nor press too much upon a lover's patience.
[*Exit Mustapha.*
Whome'er the hope, still blasted, still renewed,
Of happiness, lures on from toil to toil,
Remember Mahomet, and cease thy labour.
Behold him here, in love, in war, successful,
Behold him wretched in his double triumph;
His favourite faithless, and his mistress base.
Ambition only gave her to my arms,
By reason not convinced, nor won by love.
Ambition was her crime, but meaner folly
Dooms me to loath at once, and doat on falsehood,
And idolize the apostate I contemn.
If thou art more than the gay dream of fancy,
More than a pleasing sound without a meaning,
O happiness! sure thou art all Aspasia's.

Enter MUSTAPHA, HASSAN, *and* CARAZA.

Caraza speak—have ye remarked the Bassa?
Car. Close as we might, unseen, we watched his steps;
His air disordered, and his gait unequal,
Betrayed the wild emotions of his mind.
Sudden he stops, and inward turns his eyes,
Absorbed in thought; then starting from his trance,
Constrains a sullen smile, and shoots away.
With him Abdalla we beheld—
Mus. Abdalla!
Mah. He wears, of late, resentment on his brow,
Denied the government of Servia's province.
Car. We marked him storming in excess of fury,
And heard within the thicket that concealed us,
An undistinguished sound of threatening rage.
Mus. How guilt, once harboured in the conscious breast,
Intimidates the brave, degrades the great!
See Cali, dread of kings, and pride of armies,
By treason levelled with the dregs of men.
Ere guilty fear depressed the hoary chief,
An angry murmur, a rebellious frown,
Had stretched the fiery boaster in the grave.
Mah. Shall monarchs fear to draw the sword of justice,
Awed by the crowd, and by their slaves restrained?
Seize him this night, and through the private passage
Convey him to the prison's inmost depths,
Reserved to all the pangs of tedious death.
[*Exeunt Mahomet and Mustapha.*
Has. Shall then the Greeks, unpunished and concealed,
Contrive, perhaps, the ruin of our empire,
League with our chiefs, and propagate sedition?
Car. Whate'er their scheme the Bassa's death defeats it,
And gratitude's strong ties restrain my tongue.
Has. What ties to slaves? what gratitude to foes?

Car. In that black day, when slaughtered thousands fell
Around these fatal walls, the tide of war
Bore me victorious onward, where Demetrius
Tore, unresisted, from the giant hand
Of stern Sebalias, the triumphant crescent,
And dashed the might of Asem from the ramparts.
There I became, nor blush to make it known,
The captive of his sword. The coward Greeks,
Enraged by wrongs, exulting with success,
Doomed me to die, with all the Turkish captains.
But brave Demetrius scorned the mean revenge,
And gave me life—
Has. Do thou repay the gift,
Lest unrewarded mercy lose its charms.
Profuse of wealth, or bounteous of success,
When Heaven bestows the privilege to bless,
Let no weak doubt the generous hand restrain,
For when was power beneficent in vain?
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

ASPASIA *solus.*

Asp. In these dark moments of suspended fate,
While yet the future fortune of my country
Lies in the womb of Providence concealed,
And anxious angels wait the mighty birth;
O grant thy sacred influence, powerful Virtue!
Attention rise, survey the fair creation,
Till, conscious of the encircling deity,
Beyond the mists of care thy pinion towers.
This calm, these joys, dear innocence! are thine;
Joys ill exchanged for gold, and pride, and empire.

Enter IRENE, *and attendants.*

Irene. See how the moon, through all the unclouded sky,
Spreads her mild radiance, and descending dews
Revive the languid flowers! thus nature shone
New from the Maker's hand, and fair arrayed
In the bright colours of primeval spring;
When purity, while fraud was yet unknown,
Played fearless in the inviolated shades.
This elemental joy, this general calm,
Is sure the smile of unoffended Heaven.
Yet, why——
Maid. Behold, within the embowering grove,
Aspasia stands——
Irene. With melancholy mien,
Pensive, and envious of Irene's greatness.
Steal, unperceived, upon her meditations—
But see! the lofty maid, at our approach,
Resumes the imperious air of haughty virtue.
Are these the unceasing joys, the unmingled pleasures,
For which Aspasia scorned the Turkish crown?
[*To Aspasia.*
Is this the unshaken confidence in Heaven?
Is this the boasted bliss of conscious virtue?
When did content sigh out her cares in secret?
When did felicity repine in deserts?
Asp. Ill suits with guilt the gaieties of triumph;
When daring vice insults eternal justice,
The ministers of wrath forget compassion,
And snatch the flaming bolt with hasty hand.
Irene. Forbear thy threats, proud propheteſs of ill,
Versed in the secret counsels of the sky!
Asp. Forbear—but thou art sunk beneath reproach;
In vain affected raptures flush the cheek,
And songs of pleasure warble from the tongue,
When fear and anguish labour in the breast,
And all within is darkness and confusion.
Thus, on deceitful Ætna's flowery side,
Unfading verdure glads the roving eye;
While secret flames, with unextinguished rage,
Insatiate on her wasted entrails prey,
And melt her treacherous beauties into ruin!

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. Fly, fly, my love! destruction rushes on us!
The rack expects us, and the sword pursues!
Asp. Is Greece delivered? Is the tyrant fallen?
Dem. Greece is no more; the prosperous tyrant lives,
Reserved, for other lands, the scourge of Heaven.
Asp. Say, by what fraud, what force, were you defeated?
Betrayed by falschood, or by crowds o'erborne?
Dem. The pressing exigence forbids relation.
Abdalla———
Asp. Hated name! his jealous rage
Broke out in perfidy—Oh, cursed Aspasia!
Born to complete the ruin of her country!
Hide me! oh, hide me from upbraiding Greece!
Oh, hide me from myself!
Dem. Be fruitless grief,
The doom of guilt alone, nor dare to seize
The breast where virtue guards the throne of peace!
Devolve, dear maid, thy sorrows on the wretch,
Whose fear, or rage, or treachery, betrayed us!
Irene. [*Aside.*] A private station may discover more!
Then let me rid them of Irene's presence:
Proceed, and give a loose to love and treason!
[*Withdraws.*
Asp. Yet tell.
Dem. To tell, or hear, were waste of life.
Asp. The life, which only this design supported,
Were now well lost, in hearing how you failed.
Dem. Or meanly fraudulent, or madly gay,

Abdalla, while we waited near the palace,
With ill-timed mirth, proposed the bowl of love.
Just as it reached my lips, a sudden cry
Urged me to dash it to the ground untouched,
And seize my sword with disencumbered hand.
Asp. What cry? The stratagem? Did then Abdalla——
Dem. At once a thousand passions fired his cheek:
Then all is past, he cried—and darted from us:
Nor at the call of Cali deigned to turn.
Asp. Why did you stay, deserted and betrayed?
What more could force attempt, or art contrive?
Dem. Amazement seized us, and the hoary Bassa
Stood torpid in suspence; but soon Abdalla
Returned with force, that made resistance vain,
And bade his new confederates seize the traitors.
Cali, disarmed, was borne away to death;
Myself escaped, or favoured or neglected.
Asp. O Greece! renowned for science and for wealth,
Behold thy boasted honours snatched away!
Dem. Though disappointment blast our general scheme,
Yet much remains to hope. I shall not call
The day disastrous, that secures our flight;
Nor think that effort lost which rescues thee.

Enter ABDALLA.

Abd. At length the prize is mine.—The haughty maid,
That bears the fate of empires in her air,
Henceforth shall live for me; for me alone
Shall plume her charms, and, with attentive watch,
Steal from Abdalla's eye the sign to smile!
Dem. Cease this wild roar of savage exultation;
Advance, and perish in the frantic boast!
Asp. Forbear, Demetrius, 'tis Aspasia calls thee;
Thy love, Aspasia, calls; restrain thy sword;
Nor rush on useless wounds with idle courage.
Dem. What now remains?
Asp. It now remains to fly.
Dem. Shall, then, the savage live, to boast his insult,
Tell how Demetrius shunned his single hand,
And stole his life and mistress from his sabre?
Abd. Infatuate loiterer! has fate, in vain,
Unclasped his iron gripe to set thee free?
Still dost thou flutter in the jaws of death,
Snared with thy fears, and mazed in stupefaction?
Dem. Forgive, my fair; 'tis life, 'tis nature calls.
Now, traitor, feel the fear that chills my hand!
Asp. 'Tis madness to provoke superfluous danger,
And cowardice to dread the boast of folly.
Abd. Fly, wretch, while yet my pity grants thee flight;
The power of Turkey waits upon my call.
Leave but this maid, resign a hopeless claim,
And drag away thy life in scorn and safety;
Thy life, too mean a prey to lure Abdalla!
Dem. Once more I dare thy sword; behold the prize!
Behold I quit her to the chance of battle!
[*Quitting Aspasia.*
Abd. Well mayst thou call thy master to the combat,
And try the hazard, that hast nought to stake;
Alike my death or thine is gain to thee;
But soon thou shalt repent: another moment
Shall throw the attending Janizaries round thee!
[*Exit, hastily, Abdalla.*
Irene. Abdalla fails; now fortune all is mine.
[*Aside.*
Haste, Murza, to the palace; let the sultan
[*To one of her attendants.*
Dispatch his guards to stop the flying traitors,
While I protract their stay. Be swift and faithful. [*Exit Murza.*
This lucky stratagem shall charm the sultan,
Secure his confidence, and fix his love. [*Aside.*
Dem. Behold a boaster's worth! Now snatch, my fair,
The happy moment; hasten to the shore,
Ere he return with thousands at his side.
Asp. In vain I listen to the inviting call
Of freedom and of love: My trembling joints,
Relaxed with fear, refuse to bear me forward!
Depart, Demetrius, lest my fate involve thee;
Forsake a wretch abandoned to despair,
To share the miseries herself has caused.
Dem. Let us not struggle with the Eternal Will,
Nor languish o'er irreparable ruins;
Come, haste, and live—Thy innocence and truth
Shall bless our wanderings, and propitiate Heaven.
Irene. Press not her flight, while yet her feeble nerves
Refuse their office, and uncertain life
Still labours with imaginary woe.
Here, let me tend her with officious care,
Watch each unquiet flutter of the breast,
And joy to feel the vital warmth return,
To see the cloud forsake her kindling cheek,
And hail the rosy dawn of rising health.
Asp. Oh! rather scornful of flagitious greatness,
Resolve to share our dangers and our toils,
Companion of our flight, illustrious exile,
Leave slavery, guilt, and infamy behind.
Irene. My soul attends thy voice, and banished virtue
Strives to regain her empire of the mind:
Assist her efforts with thy strong persuasion!
Sure 'tis the happy hour ordained above,
When vanquished vice shall tyrannize no more.
Dem. Remember, peace and anguish are before thee,

And honour and reproach, and heaven and hell.
Asp. Content with freedom, and precarious greatness.
Dem. Now make thy choice, while yet the power of choice
Kind heaven affords thee, and inviting mercy
Holds out her hand to lead thee back to truth.
Irene. Stay—in this dubious twilight of conviction,
The gleams of reason, and the clouds of passion,
Irradiate and obscure my breast by turns:
Stay but a moment, and prevailing truth
Will spread resistless light upon my soul.
Dem. But since none knows the danger of a moment,
And Heaven forbids to lavish life away,
Let kind compulsion terminate the contest.
[*Seizing her hand.*
Ye christian captives, follow me to freedom!
A galley waits us, and the winds invite.
Irene. Whence is this violence?
Dem. Your calmer thought
Will teach a gentler term.
Irene. Forbear this rudeness,
And learn the reverence due to Turkey's queen.
Fly, slaves, and call the sultan to my rescue!
Dem. Farewell, unhappy maid! may every joy
Be thine, that wealth can give, or guilt receive.
Asp. And when, contemptuous of imperial power,
Disease shall chase the phantoms of ambition,
May penitence attend thy mournful bed,
And wing thy latest prayer to pitying Heaven.
[*Exeunt Demetrius, Aspasia, with part of the attendants.*

IRENE *walks at a distance from her attendants. After a pause—*

Against the head which innocence secures,
Insidious malice aims her darts in vain,
Turned backwards by the powerful breath of Heaven.
Perhaps even now, the lovers, unpursued,
Bound o'er the sparkling waves. Go, happy bark,
Thy sacred freight shall still the raging main.
To guide thy passage shall the aerial spirits
Fill all the starry lamps with double blaze;
The applauding sky shall pour forth all its beams
To grace the triumph of victorious virtue:
While I, not yet familiar to my crimes,
Recoil from thought, and shudder at myself.
How am I changed! How lately did Irene
Fly from the busy pleasures of her sex,
Well pleased to search the treasures of remembrance,
And live her guiltless moments o'er anew!
Come, let us seek new pleasures in the palace,
[*To her attendants, going off.*
Till soft fatigue invite us to repose.

Enter MUSTAPHA, *meeting and stopping her.*

Mus. Fair falsehood, stay!
Irene. What dream of sudden power
Has taught my slave the language of command!
Henceforth be wise, nor hope a second pardon.
Mus. Who calls for pardon from a wretch condemned?
Irene. Thy look, thy speech, thy action, all is wildness—
Who charges guilt on me?
Mus. Who charges guilt?
Ask of thy heart? attend the voice of conscience—
Who charges guilt? lay by this proud resentment,
That fires thy cheek, and elevates thy mien,
Nor thus usurp the dignity of virtue.
Review this day.
Irene. Whate'er thy accusation,
The sultan is my judge.
Mus. That hope is past;
Hard was the strife of justice and of love,
But now 'tis o'er, and justice has prevailed.
Know'st thou not Cali? know'st thou not Demetrius?
Irene. Bold slave, I know them both—I know them traitors.
Mus. Perfidious!—yes—too well thou know'st them traitors.
Irene. Their treason throws no stain upon Irene.
This day has proved my fondness for the sultan;
He knew Irene's truth.
Mus. The sultan knows it;
He knows how near apostacy to treason—
But 'tis not mine to judge—I scorn and leave thee.
I go, lest vengeance urge my hand to blood,
To blood, too mean to stain a soldier's sabre.
[*Exit Mustapha.*
Irene. Go, blustring slave.—He has not heard of Murza.
[*Irene to her attendants.*
That dexterous message frees me from suspicion.

Enter HASSAN, CARAZA, *with mutes, who throw the black robe upon* IRENE, *and sign to her attendants to withdraw.*

Has. Forgive, fair excellence, the unwilling tongue,
The tongue, that, forced by strong necessity,
Bids beauty, such as thine, prepare to die!
Irene. What wild mistake is this? Take hence, with speed,
Your robe of mourning, and your dogs of death.
Quick from my sight, you inauspicious monsters!
Nor dare henceforth to shock Irene's walks!
Has. Alas! they come, commanded by the sultan,
The unpitying ministers of Turkish justice,
Nor dare to spare the life his frown condemns.
Irene. Are these the rapid thunderbolts of war,
That pour with sudden violence on kingdoms,
And spread their flames resistless o'er the world?
What sleepy charms benumb these active heroes,
Depress their spirits, and retard their speed

Beyond the fear of lingering punishment?
Aspasia, now within her lover's arms,
Securely sleeps, and, in delightful dreams,
Smiles at the threatenings of defeated rage.
Car. We come, bright virgin, though relenting nature
Shrinks at the hated task, for thy destruction;
When, summoned by the sultan's clamorous fury,
We asked, with timorous tongue, the offender's name,
He struck his tortured breast, and roared, 'Irene!'
We started at the sound; again enquired;
Again his thundering voice returned, 'Irene!'
Irene. Whence is this rage? what barbarous tongue has wronged me?
What fraud misleads him, or what crimes incense?
Has. Expiring Cali named Irene's chamber
The place appointed for his master's death.
Irene. Irene's chamber! From my faithful bosom
Far be the thought!—But hear my protestation.
Car. 'Tis ours, alas! to punish, not to judge;
Not called to try the cause, we heard the sentence,
Ordained the mournful messengers of death.
Irene. Some ill designing statesman's base intrigue!
Some cruel stratagem of jealous beauty!
Perhaps yourselves the villains that defame me,
Now haste to murder, ere returning thought
Recall the extorted doom.—It must be so;
Confess your crime, or lead me to the sultan.
There, dauntless truth shall blast the vile accuser;
Then shall you feel what language cannot utter,
Each piercing torture, every change of pain,
That vengeance can invent, or power inflict.

Enter ABDALLA, *he stops short and listens.*

Abd. [*Aside.*] All is not lost, Abdalla; see the queen,
See the last witness of thy guilt and fear,
Enrobed in death—Dispatch her, and be great.
Car. Unhappy fair! Compassion calls upon me
To check this torrent of imperious rage.
While unavailing anger crowds thy tongue
With idle threats and fruitless exclamation,
The fraudful moments ply their silent wings,
And steal thy life away. Death's horrid angel
Already shakes his bloody sabre o'er thee.
The raging sultan burns till our return,
Curses the dull delays of lingering mercy,
And thinks his fatal mandates ill obeyed.
Abd. Is then your sovereign's life so cheaply rated,
That thus you parley with detected treason?
Should she prevail to gain the sultan's presence,
Soon might her tears engage a lover's credit;
Perhaps her malice might transfer the charge;
Perhaps her poisonous tongue might blast Abdalla.
Irene. O let me but be heard, nor fear from me
Or flights of power, or projects of ambition!
My hopes, my wishes, terminate in life,
A little life for grief, and for repentance.
Abd. I marked her wily messenger afar,
And saw him skulking in the closest walks:
I guessed her dark designs, and warned the sultan,
And bring her former sentence new confirmed.
Has. Then call it not our cruelty, nor crime;
Deem us not deaf to woe, nor blind to beauty,
That, thus constrained, we speed the stroke of death. [*Beckons the mutes.*
Irene. O name not death! Distraction and amazement,
Horror and agony, are in that sound!
Let me but live, heap woes on woes upon me;
Hide me with murderers in the dungeon's gloom;
Send me to wander on some pathless shore;
Let shame and hooting infamy pursue me;
Let slavery harass, and let hunger gripe!
Car. Could we reverse the sentence of the sultan,
Our bleeding bosoms plead Irene's cause.
But cries and tears are vain; prepare, with patience,
To meet that fate we can delay no longer.
[*The mutes, at the sign, lay hold of her.*
Abd. Dispatch, ye lingering slaves! or nimbler hands,
Quick at my call, shall execute your charge;
Dispatch, and learn a fitter time for pity.
Irene. Grant me one hour, O grant me but a moment,
And bounteous Heaven repay the mighty mercy
With peaceful death, and happiness eternal!
Car. The prayer I cannot grant——I dare not hear.
Short be thy pains. [*Signs again to the mutes.*
Irene. Unutterable anguish!
Guilt and despair! pale spectres grin around me,
And stun me with the yellings of damnation!
O, hear my prayers! accept, all-pitying Heaven,
These tears, these pangs, these last remains of life,
Nor let the crimes of this detested day
Be charged upon my soul. O, mercy! mercy!
[*Mutes force her out.*
Abd. [*Aside.*] Safe in her death, and in Demetrius' flight,
Abdalla, bid thy troubled breast be calm;
Now shalt thou shine the darling of the sultan,
The plot all Cali's, the detection thine.
Has. [*To Caraza.*] Does not thy bosom, for I know thee tender,
A stranger to the oppressor's savage joy,
Melt at Irene's fate, and share her woes?
Car. Her piercing cries yet fill the loaded air,
Dwell on my ear, and sadden all my soul;
But let us try to clear our clouded brows,
And tell the horrid tale with cheerful face;
The stormy sultan rages at our stay.

Abd. Frame your report with circumspective art,
Inflame her crimes, exalt your own obedience,
But let no thoughtless hint involve Abdalla.
Car. What need of caution to report the fate
Of her the sultan's voice condemned to die?
Or why should he, whose violence of duty
Has served his prince so well, demand our silence?
Abd. Perhaps my zeal, too fierce, betrayed my prudence;
Perhaps my warmth exceeded my commission;
Perhaps I will not stoop to plead my cause;
Or argue with the slave that saved Demetrius.
Car. From his escape learn thou the power of virtue,
Nor hope his fortune while thou want'st his worth.
Has. The sultan comes, still gloomy, still enraged.

Enter MAHOMET *and* MUSTAPHA.

Mah. Where's this fair traitress? Where's this smiling mischief,
Whom neither vows could fix, nor favours bind?
Has. Thine orders, mighty sultan! are performed,
And all Irene now is breathless clay!
Mah. Your hasty zeal defrauds the claim of justice,
And disappointed vengeance burns in vain;
I came to heighten tortures by reproach,
And add new terrors to the face of death.
Was this the maid whose love I bought with empire!
True, she was fair; the smile of innocence
Played on her cheek—So shone the first apostate—
Irene's chamber! Did not roaring Cali,
Just as the rack forced out his struggling soul,
Name, for the scene of death, Irene's chamber?
Mus. His breath, prolonged but to detect her treason,
Then, in short sighs, forsook his broken frame.
Mah. Decreed to perish in Irene's chamber!
There had she lulled me with endearing falsehoods,
Clasped in her arms, or slumbering on her breast,
And bared my bosom to the ruffian's dagger.

Enter MURZA.

Mur. Forgive, great sultan! that, by fate prevented,
I bring a tardy message from Irene.
Mah. Some artful wile of counterfeited love!
Some soft decoy to lure me to destruction!
And thou, the cursed accomplice of her treason,
Declare thy message, and expect thy doom.
Mur. The queen requested, that a chosen troop
Might intercept the traitor Greek, Demetrius,
Then lingering with his captive mistress here.
Mus. The Greek, Demetrius, whom the expiring Bassa
Declared the chief associate of his guilt!
Mah. A chosen troop—to intercept—Demetrius—
The queen requested—Wretch, repeat the message;
And if one varied accent prove thy falsehood,
Or but one moment's pause betray confusion,
Those trembling limbs—Speak out, thou shivering traitor!
Mur. The queen requested—
Mah. Who? the dead Irene?
Was she then guiltless! Has my thoughtless rage
Destroyed the fairest workmanship of heaven!
Doomed her to death, unpitied and unheard,
Amidst her kind solicitudes for me!
Ye slaves of cruelty, ye tools of rage,
[*To Has. and Car.*
Ye blind officious ministers of folly,
Could not her charms repress your zeal for murder?
Could not her prayers, her innocence, her tears,
Suspend the dreadful sentence for an hour?
One hour had freed me from the fatal error;
One hour had saved me from despair and madness.
Car. Your fierce impatience forced us from your presence,
Urged us to speed, and bade us banish pity,
Nor trust our passions with her fatal charms.
Mah. What hadst thou lost by slighting those commands?
Thy life perhaps—Were but Irene spared,
Well if a thousand lives like thine had perished;
Such beauty, sweetness, love, were cheaply bought,
With half the grovelling slaves that load the globe.
Mus. Great is thy woe! but think, illustrious sultan,
Such ills are sent for souls like thine to conquer.
Shake off this weight of unavailing grief;
Rush to the war, display thy dreadful banners,
And lead thy troops victorious round the world.
Mah. Robbed of the maid, with whom I wished to triumph,
No more I burn for fame or for dominion;
Success and conquest now are empty sounds,
Remorse and anguish seize on all my breast;
Those groves, whose shades embowered the dear Irene,
Heard her last cries, and fanned her dying beauties,
Shall hide me from the tasteless world for ever.
[*Mahomet goes back and returns.*
Yet ere I quit the sceptre of dominion,
Let one just act conclude the hateful day.
Hew down, ye guards, those vassals of distraction, [*Pointing to Husan and Caraza.*

Those hounds of blood, that catch the hint to kill;
Bear off, with eager haste, the unfinished sentence,
And speed the stroke lest mercy should o'ertake them.
Car. Then hear, great Mahomet, the voice of truth!
Mah. Hear? shall I hear thee! didst thou hear Irene?
Car. Hear but a moment!
Mah. Hadst thou heard a moment,
Thou mightst have lived, for thou hadst spared Irene.
Car. I heard her, pitied her, and wished to save her.
Mah. And wished—Be still thy fate to wish in vain.
Car. I heard, and softened, till Abdalla brought
Her final doom, and hurried her destruction.
Mah. Abdalla brought her doom! Abdalla brought it!
The wretch, whose guilt, declared by tortured Cali,
My rage and grief had hid from my remembrance!
Abdalla brought her doom!
Has. Abdalla brought it,
While she yet begged to plead her cause before thee.
Mah. O seize me, madness! Did she call on me?
I feel, I see the ruffian's barbarous rage.
He seized her melting in the fond appeal,
And stopped the heavenly voice that called on me.
My spirits fail, awhile support me, vengeance—
Be just, ye slaves, and to be just, be cruel,
Contrive new racks, imbitter every pang,
Inflict whatever treason can deserve,
Which murdered innocence that called on me.
[*Exit Mahomet, Abdalla, &c.*
Must. [*To Murza.*] What plagues, what tortures are in store for thee,
Thou sluggish idler, dilatory slave!
Behold the model of consummate beauty,
Torn from the mourning earth by thy neglect.
Mur. Such was the will of Heaven—A band of Greeks,
That marked my course, suspicious of my purpose,
Rushed out and seized me, thoughtless and unarmed,
Breathless, amazed, and on the guarded beach
Detained me, till Demetrius set me free.
Mus. So sure the fall of greatness raised on crimes;
So fixed the justice of all-conscious Heaven.
When haughty guilt exults with impious joy,
Mistake shall blast, or accident destroy;
Weak man, with erring rage, may throw the dart,
But Heaven shall guide it to the guilty heart.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

THE

ROMAN FATHER.

BY

WHITEHEAD.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.	WOMEN.
TULLUS HOSTILIUS, *king of Rome,*	HORATIA, *daughter to Horatius.*
HORATIUS, *a Roman senator.*	VALERIA, *sister to Valerius.*
PUBLIUS HORATIUS, *his son.*	
VALERIUS, *a young Patrician.*	*Citizens, Guards, and Attendants.*

Scene—Rome.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A room in* HORATIUS's *house.*

A Soldier crosses the stage, HORATIA *following.*

Horatia. STAY, soldier. As you parted from my father,
Something I overheard, of near concern,
But all imperfectly. Said you not Alba
Was on the brink of fate, and Rome determined,
This day, to crush her haughty rival's power,
Or perish in the attempt?

Sold. 'Twas so resolved
This morning, lady, ere I left the camp.
Our heroes are tired out with lingering war,
And half-unmeaning fight.

Horatia. Alas! I hoped
The kind remorse, which touched the kindred states,
And made their swords fall lightly on the breasts
Of foes they could not hate, might have produced
A milder resolution. Then this day
Is fixed for death or conquest? [*He bows.*] To me death,
Whoever conquers! [*Aside.*] I detain you, sir.
Commend me to my brothers; say, I wish——
But wherefore should I wish? The gods will crown
Their virtues with the just success they merit—
Yet let me ask you, sir——

Sold. My duty, lady,
Commands me hence. Ere this they have engaged;
And conquest's self would lose its charms to me,
Should I not share the danger.

As the Soldier goes out, VALERIA *enters, who looks first on him, and then on* HORATIA.

Valeria. My dear Horatia, wherefore wilt thou court
The means to be unhappy? Still enquiring,
Still more to be undone. I heard it too;
And flew to find thee, ere the fatal news
Had hurt thy quiet, that thou mightst have learnt it
From a friend's tongue, and dressed in gentler terms.

Horatia. Oh, I am lost, Valeria! lost to virtue!
Even while my country's fate, the fate of Rome,
Hangs on the conqueror's sword, this breast can feel
A softer passion, and divide its cares!
Alba to me is Rome. Wouldst thou believe it?
I would have sent, by him thou saw'st departing,

Kind wishes to my brothers; but my tongue
Denied its office, and this rebel heart
Even dreaded their success. Oh, Curiatius!
Why art thou there, or why an enemy?
Valeria. Forbear this self reproach; he is thy husband,
And who can blame thy fears? If fortune make him
Awhile thy country's foe, she cannot cancel
Vows registered above. What though the priest
Had not confirmed it at the sacred altar;
Yet were your hearts united, and that union
Approved by each consenting parent's choice.
Your brothers loved him as a friend, a brother:
And all the ties of kindred pleaded for him,
And still must plead, whate'er our heroes teach us,
Of patriot-strength. Our country may demand
We should be wretched, and we must obey;
But never can require us not to feel,
That we are miserable: nature there
Will give the lie to virtue.
Horatia. True; yet sure
A Roman virgin should be more than woman.
Are we not early taught to mock at pain,
And look on danger with undaunted eyes?
But what are dangers? what the ghastliest form
Of death itself?—Oh, were I only bid,
To rush into the Tiber's foaming wave,
Swoln with uncommon floods, or from the height
Of yon Tarpeian rock, whose giddy steep
Has turned me pale with horror at the sight,
I'd think the task were nothing!—but to bear
These strange vicissitudes of torturing pain,
To fear, to doubt, and to despair as I do!——
Valeria. And why despair? Have we so idly learned
The noblest lessons of our infant days,
Our trust above? Does there not still remain
The wretch's last retreat—the gods, Horatia?
'Tis from their awful wills our evils spring,
And at their altars may we find relief.
Say, shall we thither?—Look not thus dejected,
But answer me. A confidence in them,
E'en in this crisis of our fate, will calm
Thy troubled soul, and fill thy breast with hope.
Horatia. Talk not of hope; the wretch on yonder plain,
Who hears the victor's threats, and sees his sword
Impending o'er him, feels no surer fate,
Though less delayed than mine! What should I hope?
That Alba conquer?—Cursed be every thought
Which looks that way! The shrieks of captive matrons
Sound in my ears!
Valeria. Forbear, forbear, Horatia;
Nor fright me with the thought. Rome cannot fall.
Think on the glorious battles she has fought;
Has she once failed, though oft exposed to danger?
And has not her immortal founder promised,
That she should rise the mistress of the world?
Horatia. And if Rome conquers, then Horatia dies!
Valeria. Why wilt thou form vain images of horror,
Industrious to be wretched? Is it, then,
Become impossible that Rome should triumph,
And Curiatius live? He must, he shall;
Protecting gods shall spread their shields around him,
And love shall combat in Horatia's cause.
Horatia. Think'st thou so meanly of him?—No, Valeria,
His soul's too great to give me such a trial;
Or could it ever come, I think, myself,
Thus lost in love, thus abject as I am,
I should despise the slave who dared survive
His country's ruin. Ye immortal powers!
I love his fame too well, his spotless honour,
At least I hope I do, to wish him mine
On any terms which he must blush to own.
Hor. [*Without.*] What ho! Vindicius!
Horatia. What means that shout?—Might we not ask, Valeria?
Didst thou not wish me to the temple?—Come,
I will attend thee thither: the kind gods
Perhaps may ease this throbbing heart, and spread
At least a temporary calm within.
Valeria. Alas, Horatia, 'tis not to the temple
That thou wouldst fly; the shout alone alarms thee.
But do not thus anticipate thy fate;
Why shouldst thou learn each chance of varying war,
Which takes a thousand turns, and shifts the scene
From bad to good, as fortune smiles or frowns?
Stay but an hour perhaps, and thou shalt know
The whole at once.—I'll send—I'll fly myself
To ease thy doubts, and bring thee news of joy.
Horatia. Again, and nearer too—I must attend thee.
Valeria. Hark! 'tis thy father's voice; he comes to cheer thee.

Enter HORATIUS *and* VALERIUS.

Horatius. [*Entering.*] News from the camp, my child!
Save you, sweet maid! [*Seeing Valeria.*
Your brother brings the tidings, for, alas!
I am no warrior now; my useless age,
Far from the paths of honour, loiters here
In sluggish inactivity at home.
Yet I remember——
Horatia. You'll forgive us, sir,
If with impatience we expect the tidings.
Horatius. I had forgot; the thoughts of what I was
Engrossed my whole attention.—Pray, young soldier,
Relate it for me; you beheld the scene,
And can report it justly.

Val. Gentle lady,
The scene was piteous, though its end be peace.
Horatia. Peace? O, my fluttering heart! by what kind means?
Val. 'Twere tedious, lady, and unnecessary,
To paint the disposition of the field;
Suffice it, we were armed, and front to front
The adverse legions heard the trumpet's sound:
But vain was the alarm, for motionless,
And wrapt in thought, they stood; the kindred ranks
Had caught each other's eyes, nor dared to lift
The faultering spear against the breast they loved.
Again the alarm was given, and now they seemed
Preparing to engage, when once again
They hung their drooping heads, and inward mourned;
Then nearer drew, and at the third alarm,
Casting their swords and useless shields aside,
Rushed to each other's arms.
Hor. 'Twas so, just so,
(Though I was then a child, yet I have heard
My mother, weeping, oft relate the story)
Soft pity touched the breasts of mighty chiefs,
Romans and Sabines, when the matrons rushed
Between their meeting armies, and opposed
Their helpless infants, and their heaving breasts,
To their advancing swords, and bade them there
Sheath all their vengeance.——But I interrupt you—
Proceed, Valerius, they would hear the event.
—And yet, methinks, the Albans—pray go on.
Val. Our king Hostilius, from a rising mound,
Beheld the tender interview, and joined
His friendly tears with theirs; then swift advanced,
Even to the thickest press, and cried, 'My friends,
'If thus we love, why are we enemies?
'Shall stern ambition, rivalship of power,
'Subdue the soft humanity within us?
'Are we not joined by every tie of kindred?
'And can we find no method to compose
'These jars of honour, these nice principles
'Of virtue, which infest the noblest minds?'
Hor. There spoke his country's father! this transcends
The flight of earth-born kings, whose low ambition
But tends to lay the face of nature waste,
And blast creation!—How was it received?
Val. As he himself could wish, with eager transport.
In short, the Roman and the Alban chiefs
In council have determined, that since glory
Must have her victims, and each rival state,
Aspiring to dominion, scorns to yield,
From either army shall be chose three champions,
To fight the cause alone, and whate'er state
Shall prove superior, there acknowledged power
Shall fix the imperial seat, and both unite
Beneath one common head.
Horatia. Kind Heaven, I thank thee!
Blessed be the friendly grief that touched their souls!
Blessed be Hostilius for the generous counsel!
Blessed be the meeting chiefs! and blessed the tongue,
Which brings the gentle tidings!
Valeria. Now, Horatia,
Your idle fears are o'er.
Horatia. Yet one remains.
Who are the champions? Are they yet elected?
Has Rome———
Val. The Roman chiefs now meet in council,
And ask the presence of the sage Horatius.
Hor. [*After having seemed some time in thought.*
But still, methinks, I like not this, to trust
The Roman cause to such a slender hazard—
Three combatants!—'tis dangerous——
Horatia. [*In a fright.*] My father!
Hor. I might, perhaps, prevent it——
Horatia. Do not, sir,
Oppose the kind decree!
Val. Rest satisfied,
Sweet lady! 'tis so solemnly agreed to,
Not even Horatius's advice can shake it.
Hor. And yet 'twere well to end these civil broils:
The neighbouring states might take advantage of them.
—Would I were young again! How glorious
Were death in such a cause!—And yet, who knows—
Some of my boys may be selected for it——
Perhaps may conquer——Grant me that, kind gods,
And close my eyes in transport!—Come, Valerius,
I'll but dispatch some necessary orders,
And strait attend thee.—Daughter, if thou lov'st
Thy brothers, let thy prayers be poured to Heaven,
That one at least may share the glorious task.
[*Exit.*
Val. Rome cannot trust her cause to worthier hands.
They bade me greet you, lady. [*To Horatia.*
Well, Valeria,
This is your home, I find: your lovely friend,
And you, I doubt not, have indulged strange fears,
And run o'er all the horrid scenes of war?
Valeria. Though we are women, brother, we are Romans,
Not to be scared with shadows, though not proof
'Gainst all alarms, when real danger threatens.
Horatia. [*With some hesitation.*] My brothers, gentle sir, you said were well.
Saw you their noble friends, the Curiatii?
The truce, perhaps, permitted it.
Val. Yes, lady,
I left them jocund in your brothers' tent,
Like friends, whom envious storms awhile had parted,
Joying to meet again.

Horatia. Sent they no message?
Val. None, fair one, but such general salutation
As friends would bring unbid.
Horatia. Said Caius nothing?
Val. Caius?
Horatia. Ay, Caius! did he mention me?
Val. 'Twas slightly, if he did, and 'scapes me now——
O yes, I do remember, when your brother
Asked him, in jest, if he had aught to send,
A sigh's soft waftage, or the tender token
Of tresses breeding to fantastic forms,
To soothe a love-sick maid (your pardon, lady),
He smiled, and cried, 'Glory's the soldier's mistress.'
Horatia. Sir, you'll excuse me—something of importance——
My father may have business——Oh, Valeria!
[*Aside to Valeria.*
Talk to thy brother, know the fatal truth
I dread to hear, and let me learn to die,
If Curiatius has indeed forgot me! [*Exit.*
Val. She seems disordered!
Valeria. Has she not cause?
Can you administer the baneful potion,
And wonder at the effect?
Val. You talk in riddles!
Valeria. They're riddles, brother, which your heart unfolds,
Though you affect surprise. Was Curiatius
Indeed so cold? Poor shallow artifice!
The trick of hopeless love! I saw it plainly.
Yet what could you propose? An hour's uneasiness
To poor Horatia; for be sure by that time
She sees him, and your deep-wrought schemes are air.
Val. What could I do? this peace has ruined me;
While war continued, I had gleams of hope;
Some lucky chance might rid me of my rival,
And time efface his image in her breast.
But now———
Valeria. Yes, now you must resolve to follow
The advice I gave you first, and root this passion
Entirely from your heart; for know, she doats,
Even to distraction doats on Curiatius;
And every fear she felt, while danger threatened,
Will now endear him more.
Val. Cruel Valeria,
You triumph in my pain!
Valeria. By Heaven, I do not;
I only would extirpate every thought
Which gives you pain, nor leave one foolish wish
For hope to dally with. When friends are mad,
'Tis most unkind to humour their distraction;
Harsh means are necessary.
Val. Yet we first
Should try the gentler.
Valeria. Did I not? Ye powers!
Did I not soothe your griefs, indulge your fondness,
While the least prospect of success remained?
Did I not press you still to urge your suit,
Intreat you daily to declare your passion,
Seek out unnumbered opportunities,
And lay the follies of my sex before you?
Val. Alas! thou knowest, Valeria, woman's heart
Was never won by tales of bleeding love:
'Tis by degrees the sly enchanter works,
Assuming friendship's name, and fits the soul
For soft impressions, ere the faultering tongue,
And guilty-blushing cheek, with many a glance
Shot inadvertent, tells the secret flame.
Valeria. True, these are arts for those that love at leisure;
You had no time for tedious stratagem;
A dangerous rival pressed, and has succeeded.
Val. I own my error—yet once more assist me—
Nay, turn not from me, by my soul I meant not
To interrupt their loves.—Yet, should some accident—
'Tis not impossible—divide their hearts,
I might, perhaps, have hope: therefore 'till marriage
Cuts off all commerce, and confirms me wretched,
Be it thy task, my sister, with fond stories,
Such as our ties of blood may countenance,
To paint thy brother's worth, his power in arms,
His favour with the king, but most of all,
That certain tenderness of soul which steals
All women's hearts; then mention many a fair,
No matter whom, that sighs to call you sister.
Valeria. Well, well, away—Yet tell me, ere you go,
How did this lover talk of his Horatia?
Val. Why will you mention that ungrateful subject?
Think what you've heard me breathe a thousand times,
When my whole soul dissolved in tenderness;
'Twas rapture all; what lovers only feel,
Or can express when felt. He had been here,
But sudden orders from the camp detained him.
Farewell, Horatius waits me—but remember,
My life, nay, more than life, depends on you.
[*Exit.*
Valeria. Poor youth! he knows not how I feel his anguish,
Yet dare not seem to pity what I feel.
How shall I act betwixt this friend and brother?
Should she suspect his passion, she may doubt
My friendship too; and yet to tell it her
Were to betray his cause. No, let my heart
With the same blameless caution still proceed;
To each inclining most as most distrest,
Be just to both, and leave to Heaven the rest!
[*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Continues.*

Enter HORATIA *and* VALERIA.

Horatia. ALAS, how easily do we admit
The thing we wish were true! yet sure, Valeria,
This seeming negligence of Curiatius
Betrays a secret coldness at the heart.
May not long absence, or the charms of war,
Have damped, at least, if not effaced his passion?
I know not what to think.
Valeria. Think, my Horatia,
That you're a lover, and have learned the art
To raise vain scruples, and torment yourself
With every distant hint of fancied ill.
Your Curiatius still remains the same.
My brother idly trifled with your passion,
Or might, perhaps, unheedingly relate
What you too nearly feel. But see, your father.
Horatia. He seems transported; sure some happy news
Has brought him back thus early. Oh, my heart!
I long, yet dread to ask him. Speak, Valeria.

Enter HORATIUS.

Valeria. You're soon returned, my lord.
Hor. Returned, Valeria!
My life, my youth's returned; I tread in air!
—I cannot speak; my joy's too great for utterance.
—Oh, I could weep!—my sons, my sons are chosen
Their country's combatants; not one, but all!
Horatia. My brothers, said you, sir!
Hor. All three, my child,
All three are champions in the cause of Rome.
Oh, happy state of fathers! thus to feel
New warmth revive, and springing life renewed
Even on the margin of the grave!
Valeria. The time
Of combat, is it fixed?
Hor. This day, this hour,
Perhaps, decides our doom.
Valeria. And is it known
With whom they must engage?
Hor. Not yet, Valeria;
But with impatience we expect each moment
The resolutions of the Alban senate.
And soon may they arrive, that ere we quit
Yon hostile field, the chiefs, who dared oppose
Rome's rising glories, may, with shame, confess
The gods protect the empire they have raised.
Where are thy smiles, Horatia? Whence proceeds
This sullen silence, when my thronging joys
Want words to speak them? Prithee, talk of empire,
Talk of those darlings of my soul, thy brothers.
Call them whate'er wild fancy can suggest,
Their country's pride, the boast of future times,
The dear defence, the guardian gods of Rome!—
By Heaven, thou stand'st unmoved, nor feels thy breast
The charms of glory, the extatic warmth,
Which beams new life, and lifts us nearer Heaven!
Horatia. My gracious father, with surprize and transport
I heard the tidings, as becomes your daughter.
And like your daughter, were our sex allowed
The noble privilege which man usurps,
Could die with pleasure in my country's cause.
But yet, permit a sister's weakness, sir,
To feel the pangs of nature, and to dread
The fate of those she loves, however glorious.
And sure they cannot all survive a conflict
So desperate as this.
Hor. Survive! By Heaven,
I could not hope that they should all survive.
No; let them fall. If from their glorious deaths
Rome's freedom spring, I shall be nobly paid
For every sharpest pang the parent feels.
Had I a thousand sons, in such a cause
I could behold them bleeding at my feet,
And thank the gods with tears!

Enter PUBLIUS HORATIUS.

Pub. My father! [*Offering to kneel.*
Hor. Hence!
Kneel not to me—stand off; and let me view
At distance, and with reverential awe,
The champion of my country!—Oh, my boy!
That I should live to this—my soul's too full;
Let this and this speak for me. Bless thee, bless thee! [*Embracing him.*
But wherefore art thou absent from the camp?
Where are thy brothers? Has the Alban state
Determined? Is the time of combat fixed?
Pub. Think not, my lord, that filial reverence,
However due, had drawn me from the field,
Where nobler duty calls; a patriot's soul
Can feel no humbler ties, nor knows the voice
Of kindred, when his country claims his aid.
It was the king's command I should attend you,
Else had I staid till wreaths immortal graced
My brows, and made thee proud indeed to see
Beneath thy roof, and bending for thy blessing,
Not thine, Horatius, but the son of Rome!
Hor. Oh, virtuous pride!—'tis bliss too exquisite
For human sense!—thus, let me answer thee. [*Embracing him again.*
Where are my other boys?
Pub. They only wait
Till Alba's loitering chiefs declare her champions,
Our future victims, sir, and with the news
Will greet their father's ear.
Hor. It shall not need;
Myself will to the field. Come, let us haste!

My old blood boils, and my tumultuous spirits
Pant for the onset. O, for one short hour
Of vigorous youth, that I might share the toil
Now with my boys, and be the next my last!
Horatia. My brother!
Pub. My Horatia! ere the dews
Of evening fall, thou shalt, with transport, own me;
Shalt hold thy country's saviour in thy arms,
Or bathe his honest bier with tears of joy.
Thy lover greets thee, and complains of absence
With many a sigh, and many a longing look
Sent toward the towers of Rome.
Horatia. Methinks, a lover
Might take the advantage of the truce, and bear
His kind complaints himself; not trust his vows
To other tongues, or be obliged to tell
The passing winds his passion.
Pub. Dearest sister,
He with impatience waits the lucky moment,
That may with honour bear him to your arms.
Didst thou but hear how tenderly he talks,
How blames the dull delay of Alban councils,
And chides the lingering minutes as they pass,
Till fate determines, and the tedious chiefs
Permit his absence, thou wouldst pity him.
But soon, my sister, soon shall every bar,
Which thwarts thy happiness, be far away.
We are no longer enemies to Alba;
This day unites us, and to-morrow's sun
May hear my vows, and make my friend my brother.
Hor. [*Having talked apart with Valeria.*]
'Tis truly Roman. Here's a maid, Horatia,
Laments her brother lost the glorious proof
Of dying for his country. Come, my son,
Her softness will infect thee; prithee, leave her.
Horatia. [*Looking first on her father, and then tenderly on her brother.*] Not till my soul has poured its wishes for him.
Hear me, dread God of War! protect and save him! [*Kneeling.*
For thee, and thy immortal Rome, he fights!
Dash the proud spear from every hostile hand
That dare oppose him! may each Alban chief
Fly from his presence, or his vengeance feel!
And when in triumph he returns to Rome,
[*Rising.*
Hail him, ye maids, with grateful songs of praise,
And scatter all the blooming spring before him;
Cursed be the envious brow that smiles not then,
Cursed be the wretch that wears one mark of sorrow,
Or flies not thus with open arms to greet him!

Enter TULLUS HOSTILIUS, VALERIUS, *and Guards.*

Val. The king, my lord, approaches.
Hor. Gracious sir,
Whence comes this condescension?
Tul. Good old man,
Could I have found a nobler messenger,
I would have spared myself the ungrateful task
Of this day's embassy, for much I fear
My news will want a welcome.
Hor. Mighty king!
Forgive an old man's warmth——They have not sure
Made choice of other combatants!—My sons,
Must they not fight for Rome?
Tul. Too sure they must.
Hor. Then I am blest!
Tul. But that they must engage
Will hurt thee most, when thou shalt know with whom.
Hor. I care not whom.
Tul. Suppose your nearest friends,
The Curiatii, were the Alban choice,
Could you bear that? Could you, young man, support
A conflict there?
Pub. I could perform my duty,
Great sir, though even a brother should oppose me.
Tul. Thou art a Roman! Let thy king embrace thee!
Hor. And let thy father catch thee from his arms!
Tul. [*To Publius.*] Know then, that trial must be thine. The Albans
With envy saw one family produce
Three chiefs, to whom their country dared entrust
The Roman cause, and scorned to be outdone.
Horatia. Then I am lost indeed! was it for this,
For this, I prayed! [*Swoons.*
Pub. My sister!
Valeria. My Horatia!
Hor. Oh, foolish girl, to shame thy father thus!
Here, bear her in.
[*Horatia is carried in, Valerius and Valeria follow.*]
I am concerned, my sovereign,
That even the meanest part of me should blast,
With impious grief, a cause of so much glory.
But let the virtue of my boy excuse it.
Tul. It does most amply. She has cause for sorrow.
The shock was sudden, and might well alarm
A firmer bosom. The weak sex demand
Our pity, not our anger; their soft breasts
Are nearer touched, and more exposed to sorrows
Than man's experter sense. Nor let us blame
That tenderness, which smooths our rougher natures,
And softens all the joys of social life.
We leave her to her tears. For you, young soldier,
You must prepare for combat. Some few hours
Are all that are allowed you. But, I charge you,
Try well your heart, and strengthen every thought

Of patriot in you. Think, how dreadful 'tis
To plant a dagger in the breast you love;
To spurn the ties of nature, and forget,
In one short hour, whole years of virtuous friendship.
Think well on that.
Pub. I do, my gracious sovereign;
And think, the more I dare subdue affection,
The more my glory.
Tul. True; but yet consider,
Is it an easy task to change affections?
In the dread onset can your meeting eyes
Forget their usual intercourse, and wear
At once the frown of war, and stern defiance?
Will not each look recal the fond remembrance
Of childhood past, when the whole open soul
Breathed cordial love, and plighted many a vow
Of tenderest import? Think on that, young soldier,
And tell me if thy breast be still unmoved?
Pub. Think not, oh, king, howe'er resolved on combat,
I sit so loosely to the bonds of nature,
As not to feel their force. I feel it strongly.
I love the Curiatii, and would serve them
At life's expence: but here a nobler cause
Demands my sword: for all connections else,
All private duties, are subordinate
To what we owe the public. Partial ties
Of son and father, husband, friend, or brother,
Owe their enjoyments to the public safety,
And without that were vain. Nor need we, sir,
Cast off humanity, and to be heroes,
Cease to be men. As in our earliest days,
While yet we learned the exercise of war,
We strove together, not as enemies,
Yet conscious each of his peculiar worth,
And scorning each to yield; so will we now
Engage, with ardent, not with hostile minds,
Not fired with rage, but emulous of fame.
Tul. Now I dare trust thee; go and teach thy brothers
To think like thee, and conquest is your own.
This is true courage, not the brutal force
Of vulgar heroes, but the firm resolve
Of virtue and of reason. He, who thinks,
Without their aid, to shine in deeds of arms,
Builds on a sandy basis his renown;
A dream, a vapour, or an ague fit
May make a coward of him. Come, Horatius,
Thy other sons shall meet you at the camp,
For now I do bethink me, 'tis not fit
They should behold their sister thus alarmed.
Haste, soldier, and detain them.
[*To one of the guards.*
Hor. Gracious sir,
We'll follow on the instant.
Tul. Then, farewell!
When next we meet, 'tis Rome and liberty!
[*Exit with guards.*
Hor. Come, let me arm thee for the glorious toil.
I have a sword, whose lightning oft has blazed
Dreadfully fatal to my country's foes;
Whose tempered edge has cleft their haughty crests,
And stained with life-blood many a reeking plain.
This shalt thou bear; myself will gird it on,
And lead thee forth to death or victory. [*Going.*
——And yet, my Publius, shall I own my weakness?
Though I detest the cause from whence they spring,
I feel thy sister's sorrows like a father.
She was my soul's delight.
Pub. And may remain so.
This sudden shock has but alarmed her virtue,
Not quite subdued its force. At least, my father,
Time's lenient hand will teach her to endure
The ills of chance, and reason conquer love.
Hor. Should we not see her?
Pub. By no means, my lord;
You heard the king's commands about my brothers,
And we have hearts as tender sure as they.
Might I advise, you should confine her closely,
Lest she infect the matrons with her grief,
And bring a stain we should not wish to fix
On the Horatian name.
Hor. It shall be so.
We'll think no more of her. 'Tis glory calls,
And humbler passions beat alarms in vain.
[*Exit.*

As HORATIUS *goes off,* HORATIA *enters at another door.*

Horatia. Where is my brother? Oh, my dearest Publius,
If e'er you loved Horatia, ever felt
That tenderness which you have seemed to feel,
Oh, hear her now!
Pub. What wouldst thou, my Horatia?
Horatia. I know not what I would—I am on the rack,
Despair and madness tear my labouring soul.
—And yet, my brother, sure you might relieve me!
Pub. How? by what means? By heaven, I'll die to do it.
Horatia. You might decline the combat.
Pub. Ha!
Horatia. I do not
Expect it from thee. Prithee, look more kindly!
—And yet, is the request so very hard?
I only ask thee not to plunge thy sword
Into the breast thou lovest, not kill thy friend;
Is that so hard? I might have said thy brother!
Pub. What canst thou mean? Beware, beware, Horatia;
Thou knowest I dearly love thee, nay, thou knowest
I love the man with whom I must engage.
Yet hast thou faintly read thy brother's soul,

If thou canst think entreaties have the power,
Though urged with all the tenderness of tears,
To shake his settled purpose: they may make
My task more hard, and my soul bleed within me,
But cannot touch my virtue.
Horatia. 'Tis not virtue
Which contradicts our nature, 'tis the rage
Of over-weening pride. Has Rome no champions
She could oppose but you? Are there not thousands
As warm for glory, and as tried in arms,
Who might, without a crime, aspire to conquest,
Or die with honest fame?
Pub. Away, away!
Talk to thy lover thus. But 'tis not Caius
Thou wouldst have infamous.
Horatia. Oh, kill me not
With such unkind reproaches! Yes, I own
I love him, more——
Pub. Than a chaste Roman maid
Should dare confess.
Horatia. Should dare! What means my brother?
I have my father's sanction on my love,
And duty taught me first to feel its power.
Should dare confess! Is that the dreadful crime?
Alas, but spare him, spare thy friend, Horatius,
And I will cast him from my breast for ever!
Will that oblige thee? Only let him die
By other hands, and I will learn to hate him.
Pub. Why wilt thou talk thus madly? Love him still!
And if we fall the victims of our country,
(Which Heaven avert!) wed, and enjoy him freely.
Horatia. Oh, never, never. What, my country's bane!
The murderer of my brothers! may the gods
First tear me, blast me, scatter me on winds,
And pour out each unheard-of vengeance on me!
Pub. Do not torment thyself thus idly—Go,
Compose thyself, and be again my sister.

Re-enter HORATIUS, *with the sword.*

Hor. This sword in Veii's field—What dost thou here?
Leave him, I charge thee, girl——Come, come my Publius,
Let us haste where duty calls.
Horatia. What! to the field?
He must not, shall not go; here will I hang—
Oh, if you have not quite cast off affection!
If you detest not your distracted sister——
Hor. Shame of thy race, why dost thou hang upon him?
Wouldst thou entail eternal infamy
On him, on me, on all?
Horatia. Indeed I would not;
I know I ask impossibilities;
Yet pity me, my father!
Pub. Pity thee!
Begone, fond wretch, nor urge my temper thus.
By Heaven! I love thee as a brother ought.
Then hear my last resolve; if fate, averse
To Rome and us, determine my destruction,
I charge thee wed thy lover; he will then
Deserve thee nobly. Or, if kinder gods,
Propitious, hear the prayers of suppliant Rome,
And he should fall by me, I then expect
No weak upbraidings for a lover's death,
But such returns as shall become thy birth,
A sister's thanks for having saved her country.
[*Exit.*
Horatia. Yet stay—Yet hear me, Publius—But one word——
Hor. Forbear, rash girl! thou'lt tempt thy father
To do an outrage might perhaps distract him!
Horatia. Alas! forgive me, sir, I'm very wretched,
Indeed I am—Yet I will strive to stop
This swelling grief, and bear it like your daughter.
Do but forgive me, sir.
Hor. I do, I do——
Go in, my child, the gods may find a way
To make thee happy yet. But on thy duty,
Whate'er reports may reach, or fears alarm thee,
I charge thee come not to the field!
Horatia. I will not,
If you command it, sir. But will you, then,
As far as cruel honour may permit,
Remember that your poor Horatia's life
Hangs on this dreadful contest?
Hor. Lead her in. [*Exit Horatia.*
[*Looking after her.*] Spite of my boasted strength her griefs unman me.——
But let her from my thoughts! The patriot's breast
No hopes, no fears, but for his country knows,
And in her danger loses private woes! [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Continues.*

VALERIUS *and* VALERIA *meeting.*

Val. Now, my Valeria, where's the charming she
That calls me to her? with a lover's haste
I fly to execute the dear command.
Valeria. 'Tis not the lover, but the friend she wants,
If thou darest own that name.
Val. The friend, my sister!
There's more than friendship in a lover's breast,
More warm, more tender, is the flame he feels.—
Valeria. Alas! these raptures suit not her distress:
She seeks the indulgent friend, whose sober sense,
Free from the mists of passion, might direct
Her jarring thoughts, and plead her doubtful cause.
Val. Am I that friend? Oh, did she turn her thought
On me for that kind office?
Valeria. Yes, Valerius.
She chose you out to be her advocate
To Curiatius; 'tis the only hope
She now dares cherish; her relentless brother,
With scorn, rejects her tears; her father flies her;
And only you remain to soothe her cares,
And save her ere she sinks.
Val. Her advocate
To Curiatius!
Valeria. 'Tis to him she sends you,
To urge her suit, and win him from the field.
But come, her sorrows will more strongly plead
Than all my grief can utter.
Val. To my rival!
To Curiatius plead her cause, and teach
My tongue a lesson which my heart abhors!
Impossible! Valeria, prithee say
Thou saw'st me not; the business of the camp
Confined me there. Farewell. [*Going.*
Valeria. What means my brother?
You cannot leave her now; for shame, turn back!
Is this the virtue of a Roman youth?
Oh, by these tears!——
Val. They flow in vain, Valeria:
Nay, and thou knowest they do. Oh, earth and Heaven!
This combat was the means my happier stars
Found out to save me from the brink of ruin!
And can I plead against it, turn assassin
On my own life?
Valeria. Yet thou canst murder her
Thou dost pretend to love: away, deceiver!
I'll seek some worthier messenger to plead
In beauty's cause; but first inform Horatia,
How much Valerius is the friend she thought him! [*Going.*
Val. Oh, Heavens! stay, sister; 'tis an arduous task!
Valeria. I know the task is hard, and thought I knew
Thy virtue too.
Val. I must, I will obey thee.
Lead on.—Yet prithee, for a moment leave me,
'Till I can recollect my scattered thoughts,
And dare to be unhappy.
Valeria. My Valerius!
I fly to tell her you but wait her pleasure.
[*Exit.*
Val. Yes, I will undertake this hateful office;
It never can succeed.—Yet, at this instant,
It may be dangerous, while the people melt
With fond compassion.—No, it cannot be;
His resolution's fixed, and virtuous pride
Forbids an alteration. To attempt it
Makes her my friend, and may afford hereafter
A thousand tender hours to move my suit.
That hope determines all. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Another apartment.*

Enter HORATIA *and* VALERIA; HORATIA *with a scarf in her hand.*

Horatia. Where is thy brother? Wherefore stays he thus?
Did you conjure him? did he say he'd come?
I have no brothers now, and fly to him
As my last refuge. Did he seem averse
To thy entreaties? Are all brothers so?
Alas, thou told'st me he spake kindly to thee!
'Tis me, 'tis me he shuns; I am the wretch
Whom virtue dares not make acquaintance with.
Yet fly to him again, entreat him hither,
Tell him, for thy sake, to have pity on me.
Thou art no enemy to Rome, thou hast
No Alban husband to claim half thy tears,
And make humanity a crime!
Valeria. Dear maid,
Restrain your sorrows; I've already told you
My brother will with transport execute
Whatever you command.
Horatia. Oh! wherefore then
Is he away? Each moment now is precious;
If lost, 'tis lost for ever, and if gained,
Long scenes of lasting peace, and smiling years
Of happiness unhoped-for, wait upon it.
Valeria. I will again go seek him; pray, be calm;
Success is thine if it depends on him. [*Exit.*
Horatia. Success! alas, perhaps, even now too late
I labour to preserve him; the dread arm
Of vengeance is already stretched against him,
And he must fall Yet let me strive to save him.
Yes, thou dear pledge, designed for happier hours,
[*To the scarf.*
The gift of nuptial love, thou shalt at least
Essay thy power.

Oft as I framed thy web,
He sate beside me, and would say in sport,
'This present, which thy love designs for me,
'Shall be the future bond of peace betwixt us:
'By this we'll swear a lasting love; by this,
'Through the sweet round of all our days to come,
'Ask what thou wilt, and Curiatius grants it.'
O I shall try thee nearly now, dear youth;
Glory and I are rivals for thy heart,
And one must conquer.

Enter VALERIUS *and* VALERIA.

Val. Save you, gracious lady;
On the first message which my sister sent me
I had been here, but was obliged by office,
Ere to their champions each resigned her charge,
To ratify the league 'twixt Rome and Alba.

Horatia. Are they engaged then?

Val. No, not yet engaged;
Soft pity for a while suspends the onset;
The sight of near relations, armed in fight
Against each other, touched the gazers' hearts;
And senators on each side have proposed
To change the combatants.

Horatia. My blessings on them!
Think you they will succeed?

Val. The chiefs themselves
Are resolute to fight.

Horatia. Insatiate virtue!
I must not to the field; I am confined
A prisoner here; or sure these tears would move
Their flinty breasts. Is Curiatius too
Resolved on death? O, sir, forgive a maid,
Who dares, in spite of modesty, confess
Too soft a passion. Will you pardon me,
If I entreat you to the field again,
An humble suitor from the veriest wretch
That ever knew distress.

Val. Dear lady, speak!
What would you I should do!

Horatia. O bear this to him!

Val. To whom?

Horatia. To Curiatius bear this scarf:
And tell him, if he ever truly loved;
If all the vows he breathed were not false lures
To catch the unwary mind—and sure they were not!
O tell him how he may with honour cease
To urge his cruel right; the senators
Of Rome and Alba will approve such mildness.
Tell him his wife, if he will own that name,
Intreats him from the field; his lost Horatia
Begs, on her trembling knees, he would not tempt
A certain fate, and murder her he loves.
Tell him, if he consents, she fondly swears,
By every god the varying world adores,
By this dear pledge of vowed affection, swears,
To know no brothers and no sire but him;
With him, if honour's harsh commands require it,
She'll wander forth, and seek some distant home,
Nor ever think of Rome or Alba more.

Valeria. Well, well, he will. Do not torment thyself.

[*Horatia catches hold of the scarf, which she looked upon attentively while Valeria spoke.*

Horatia. Look here, Valeria, where my needle's art
Has drawn a Sabine virgin, drowned in tears
For her lost country, and forsaken friends;
While by her side the youthful ravisher
Looks ardent love, and charms her griefs away.
I am that maid distressed, divided so
'Twixt love and duty. But why rave I thus?
Haste, haste to Curiatius—and yet stay—
Sure I have something more to say to him—
I know not what it was.

Val. Could I, sweet lady,
But paint your grief with half the force I feel it,
I need but tell it him, and he must yield.

Horatia. It may be so. Stay, stay; be sure you tell him,
If he rejects my suit, no power on earth
Shall force me to his arms. I will devise——
I'll die and be revenged!

Valeria. Away, my brother!
But, oh, for pity, do your office justly!
[*Aside to Valerius.*
Let not your passion blind your reason now;
But urge your cause with ardour.

Val. By my soul,
I will, Valeria. Her distress alarms me;
And I have now no interest but her's. [*Exit.*

Valeria. Come, dearest maid, indulge not thus your sorrows;
Hope smiles again, and the sad prospect clears.
Who knows the effect your message may produce?
The milder senators ere this perhaps
Have moved your lover's mind; and, if he doubts,
He's yours.

Horatia. He's gone—I had a thousand things—
And yet I am glad he's gone. Think you, Valeria,
Your brother will delay? They may engage
Before he reaches them.

Valeria. The field's so near,
That a few minutes brings him to the place.
And 'tis not probable the senators
So soon should yield a cause of so much justice.

Horatia. Alas! they should have thought on that before.
'Tis now too late. The lion, when he's roused,
Must have his prey, whose den we might have passed
In safety while he slept. To draw the sword,
And fire the youthful warrior's breast to arms
With awful visions of immortal fame,
And then to bid him sheath it, and forget
He ever hoped for conquest and renown—
Vain, vain attempt!

Valeria. Yet when that just attempt
Is seconded by love, and beauty's tears

†

Lend their soft aid to melt the hero down,
What may we not expect?
Horatia. My dear Valeria!
Fain would I hope I had the power to move him.
Valeria. My dear Horatia, success is yours already.
Horatia. And yet, should I succeed, the hard-gained strife
May chance to rob me of my future peace.
He may not always, with the eyes of love,
Look on that fondness which has stabbed his fame.
He may regret too late the sacrifice
He made to love, and a fond woman's weakness;
And think the milder joys of social life
But ill repay him for the mighty loss
Of patriot-reputation!
Valeria. Pray, forbear;
And search not thus into eventful time
For ills to come. This fatal temper, friend,
Alive to feel, and curious to explore
Each distant object of refined distress,
Shuts out all means of happiness, nor leaves it
In Fortune's power to save you from destruction.
Like some distempered wretch, your wayward mind
Rejects all nourishment, or turns to gall
The very balm that should relieve its anguish.
He will admire thy love, which could persuade him
To give up glory for the milder triumph
Of heart-felt ease and soft humanity.
Horatia. I fain would hope so. Yet we hear not of him.
Your brother, much I fear, has sued in vain.
Could we not send to urge this slow express?
This dread uncertainty! I long to know
My life or death at once.
Valeria. The wings of love
Cannot fly faster than my brother's zeal
Will bear him for your service.
Horatia. I believe it,
Yet doubt it too. My sickly mind unites
Strange contradictions.
Valeria. Shall I to the walls?
I may from hence, with ease, survey the field,
And can dispatch a messenger each moment,
To tell thee all goes well.
Horatia. My best Valeria!
Fly, then; I know thy heart is there already.
Thou art a Roman maid; and though thy friendship
Detains thee here with one who scarce deserves
That sacred name, art anxious for thy country.
But yet for charity think kindly of me;
For thou shalt find by the event, Valeria,
I am a Roman too, however wretched.
[*Exit Valeria.*
Am I a Roman, then? Ye powers! I dare not
Resolve the fatal question I propose.
If dying would suffice, I were a Roman:
But to stand up against this storm of passions,
Transcends a woman's weakness. Hark! what noise?
'Tis news from Curiatius! Love, I thank thee!

Enter a Servant.

Well, does he yield? Distract me not with silence!
Say, in one word——
Serv. Your father——
Horatia. What of him?
Would he not let him yield? Oh, cruel father!
Serv. Madam, he's here——
Horatia. Who?——
Serv. Borne by his attendants.
Horatia. What mean'st thou?

Enter HORATIUS, *led in by his Servants.*

Hor. Lead me yet a little onward;
I shall recover straight.
Horatia. My gracious sire!
Hor. Lend me thy arm, Horatia—So—My child,
Be not surprised; an old man must expect
These little shocks of nature; they are hints
To warn us of our end.
Horatia. How are you, sir?
Hor. Better, much better. My frail body could not
Support the swelling tumult of my soul.
Horatia. No accident, I hope, alarmed you, sir!
My brothers——
Hor. Here, go to the field again,
You, Cautus and Vindicius, and observe
Each circumstance. I shall be glad to hear
The manner of the fight.
Horatia. Are they engaged?
Hor. They are, Horatia. But first let me thank thee
For staying from the field. I would have seen
The fight myself; but this unlucky illness
Has forced me to retire. Where is thy friend?

Enter a Servant, who gives a paper to HORATIA, *and retires.*

What paper's that? Why dost thou tremble so?
Here, let me open it. [*Takes the paper, and opens it.*] From Curiatius!
Horatia. Oh, keep me not in this suspense, my father!
Relieve me from the rack.
Hor. He tells thee here,
He dare not do an action that would make him
Unworthy of thy love; and therefore——
Horatia. Dies!——
Well—I am satisfied.
Hor. I see by this
Thou hast endeavoured to persuade thy lover
To quit the combat. Couldst thou think, Horatia,
He'd sacrifice his country to a woman?
Horatia. I know not what I thought. He proves too plainly,

Whate'er it was, I was deceived in him
Whom I applied to.
Hor. Do not think so, daughter;
Could he, with honour, have declined the fight,
I should myself have joined in thy request,
And forced him from the field. But think, my child,
Had he consented, and had Alba's cause,
Supported by another arm, been baffled,
What then couldst thou expect? Would he not curse
His foolish love, and hate thee for thy fondness?
Nay, think, perhaps, 'twas artifice in thee
To aggrandize thy race, and lift their fame
Triumphant o'er his ruin and his country's?
Think well on that, and reason must convince thee.
Horatia. [*Wildly.*] Alas! had reason ever yet the power
To talk down grief, or bid the tortured wretch
Not feel his anguish? 'Tis impossible.
Could reason govern, I should now rejoice
They were engaged, and count the tedious moments
Til conquest smiled, and Rome again were free.
Could reason govern, I should beg of Heaven
To guide my brother's sword, and plunge it deep
Even in the bosom of the man I love:
I should forget he ever won my soul,
Forget 'twas your command that bade me love him,
Nay, fly, perhaps, to yon detested field,
And spurn with scorn his mangled body from me.
Hor. Why wilt thou talk thus? Pry'thee be more calm.
I can forgive thy tears; they flow from nature;
And could have gladly wished the Alban state
Had found us other enemies to vanquish.
But Heaven has willed it, and Heaven's will be done!
The glorious expectation of success
Buoys up my soul, nor lets a thought intrude
To dash my promised joys! What steady valour
Beams from their eyes! Just so, if fancy's power
May form conjecture from his after-age,
Rome's founder must have looked, when, warm in youth,
And flushed with future conquest, forth he marched
Against proud Acron, with whose bleeding spoils
He graced the altar of Feretrian Jove——
Methinks I feel recovered: I might venture
Forth to the field again. What ho! Volscinius!
Attend me to the camp.
Horatia. My dearest father,
Let me entreat your stay; the tumult there
Will discompose you, and a quick relapse
May prove most dangerous. I'll restrain my tears,
If they offend you.
Hor. Well, I'll be advised,
'Twere now too late; ere this they must have conquered;
And here's the happy messenger of glory!

Enter VALERIA.

Valeria. All's lost! All's ruined! Freedom is no more!
Hor. What dost thou say?
Valeria. That Rome's subdued by Alba.
Hor. It cannot be. Where are my sons? All dead?
Valeria. Publius is still alive—the other two
Have paid the fatal debt they owed their country.
Hor. Publius alive! You must mistake, Valeria.
He knows his duty better.
He must be dead, or Rome victorious.
Valeria. Thousands as well as I beheld the combat.
After his brothers' death he stood alone,
And acted wonders against three assailants;
Till forced, at last, to save himself by flight——
Hor. By flight! And did the soldiers let him pass?
Oh, I am ill again! The coward villain!
[*Throwing himself into his chair.*
Horatia. Alas, my brothers!
Hor. Weep not for them, girl.
They've died a death which kings themselves might envy,
And whilst they lived, they saw their country free.
Oh, had I perished with them! But for him,
Whose impious flight dishonours all his race,
Tears a fond father's heart, and tamely barters,
For poor precarious life, his country's glory—
Weep, weep for him, and let me join my tears!
Valeria. What could he do, my lord, when three opposed him?
Hor. Die!
He might have died. Oh, villain! villain! villain!
And he shall die! this arm shall sacrifice
The life he dared preserve with infamy.
[*Endeavouring to rise.*
What means this weakness? 'Tis untimely now,
When I should punish an ungrateful boy.
Was this his boasted virtue, which could charm
His cheated sovereign, and brought tears of joy
To my old eyes? So young a hypocrite!
Oh, shame, shame, shame!
Valeria. Have patience, sir; all Rome
Beheld his valour, and approved his flight,
Against such opposition.
Hor. Tell not me!
What's Rome to me? Rome may excuse her traitor;
But I'm the guardian of my house's honour,
And I will punish, Pray ye, lead me forth;

I would have air. But grant me strength, kind gods,
To do this act of justice, and I'll own
Whate'er 'gainst Rome your awful wills decree,
You still are just and merciful to me. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Horatius's house.*

Enter HORATIUS, VALERIA *following.*

Hor. AWAY, away! I feel my strength renewed,
And I will hunt the villain through the world:
No deserts shall conceal, nor darkness hide him.
He is well skilled in flight; but he shall find
'Tis not so easy to elude the vengeance
Of a wronged father's arm, as to escape
His adversary's sword.
Valeria. Restrain your rage
But for a moment, sir. When you shall hear
The whole unravelled, you will find he is innocent.
Hor. It cannot be.
Valeria. And see, my brother comes.
He may perhaps relate——
Hor. I will not hear him;
I will not listen to my shame again.

Enter VALERIUS.

Val. I come with kind condolance from the king
To soothe a father's grief, and to express——
Hor. I've heard it all; I pray you spare my blushes.
I want not consolation; 'tis enough
They perished for their country. But the third—
Val. True, he indeed may well supply your loss,
And calls for all your fondness.
Hor. All my vengeance:
And he shall have it, sir.
Val. What means my lord?
Are you alone displeased for what he has done?
Hor. 'Tis I alone, I find, must punish it.
Val. Vengeance!
Punish, my lord! What fault has he committed?
Hor. Why will you double my confusion thus?
Is flight no fault?
Val. In such a case as his
'Twas glorious.
Hor. Glorious! Oh, rare sophistry!
To find a way through infamy to glory.
Val. I scarce can trust my senses—Infamy!
What, was it infamous to save his country?
Is art a crime? Is it the name of flight
We can't forgive, though its adored effect
Restored us all to freedom, fame, and empire?
Hor. What fame, what freedom? Who has saved his country?
Val. Your son, my lord, has done it.
Hor. How, when, where?
Val. Is it possible? Did not you say you knew!
Hor. I care not what I knew—Oh, tell me all?
Is Rome still free? Has Alba—Has my son—
Tell me——
Val. Your son, my lord, has slain her champions.
Hor. What, Publius?
Val. Ay, Publius.
Hor. Oh, let me clasp thee to me!
Were there not three remaining?
Val. True, there were;
But wounded all.
Hor. Your sister here had told us
That Rome was vanquished, that my son was fled——
Val. And he did fly; but 'twas that flight preserved us.
All Rome as well as she has been deceived.
Hor. Let me again embrace thee—Come, relate it.
Did I not say, Valeria, that my boy
Must needs be dead, or Rome victorious?
I long to hear the manner—Well, Valerius—
Val. Your other sons, my lord, had paid the debt
They owed to Rome, and he alone remained
'Gainst three opponents, whose united strength,
Though wounded each, and robbed of half their force,
Was still too great for his. A while he stood
Their fierce assaults, and then pretended flight,
Only to tire his wounded adversaries.
Hor. Pretended flight, and thus succeeded, ha!
Oh, glorious boy!
Val. 'Twas better still, my lord;
For all pursued, but not with equal speed.
Each, eager for the conquest, pressed to reach him;
Nor did the first, till 'twas too late, perceive
His fainter brothers panting far behind.
Hor. He took them singly, then? An easy conquest;
'Twas boy's play only!
Val. Never did I see
Such universal joy, as when the last
Sunk on the ground beneath Horatius' sword;
Who seemed a while to parley as a friend,
And would have given him life, but Caius scorned it.
Valeria. Caius! Oh, poor Horatia!
Hor. Peace, I charge thee.
Go, dress thy face in smiles, and bid thy friend
Wake to new transports. Let ambition fire her.
What is a lover lost? There's not a youth

In Rome but will adore her. Kings will seek
For her alliance now, and mightiest chiefs
Be honoured by her smiles. Will they not, youth? [*Exit Valeria.*
Val. Most sure, my lord, this day has added worth
To her, whose merit was before unequalled.
Hor. How could I doubt his virtue!—Mighty gods!
This is true glory, to preserve his country,
And bid, by one brave act, the Horatian name
In fame's eternal volumes be enrolled.
Methinks already I behold his triumph.
Rome gazes on him like a second founder;
The wondering eye of childhood views with awe
The new divinity; and trembling age
Crowds eager on to bless him ere it dies!
Ere long, perhaps, they will raise altars to him,
And even with hymns and sacrifice adore
The virtue I suspected!—Gracious Heaven!
Where is he? Let me fly, and at his feet
Forget the father, and implore a pardon
For such injustice.
Val. You may soon, my lord,
In his embraces lose the fond remembrance
Of your mistaken rage. The king, ere this,
Has from the field dispatched him; he but staid
Till he could send him home with some slight honours
Of scattered wreaths, and grateful songs of praise;
For till to-morrow he postpones the pomp
Of solemn thanks, and sacrifice to Heaven
For liberty restored. But hark! that shout,
Which sounds from far, and seems the mingled voice
Of thousands, speaks him onward on his way.
Hor. How my heart dances!—Yet I blush to meet him.
But I will on. Come, come, Horatia; leave
[*Calling at the door.*
Thy sorrow far behind, and let us fly
With open arms to greet our common glory.
[*Exit.*

Enter HORATIA *and* VALERIA.

Horatia. Yes, I will go; this father's hard command
Shall be obeyed; and I will meet the conqueror,
But not in smiles.
Val. Oh, go not, gentle lady!
Might I advise——
Valeria. Your griefs are yet too fresh,
And may offend him. Do not, my Horatia.
Val. Indeed 'twere better to avoid his presence;
It will revive your sorrows, and recall——
Horatia. Sir, when I saw you last I was a woman,
The fool of nature, a fond prey to grief,
Made up of sighs and tears. But now my soul
Disdains the very thought of what I was;
'Tis grown too callous to be moved with toys.
Observe me well; am I not nobly changed?
Stream my sad eyes, or heaves my breast one groan?
No: for I doubt no longer. 'Tis not grief,
'Tis resolution now, and fixed despair.
Valeria. My dear Horatia, you strike terrors through me;
What dreadful purpose hast thou formed? Oh, speak!
Val. Talk gently to her.—Hear me yet, sweet lady!
You must not go; whatever you resolve,
There is a sight will pierce you to the soul.
Horatia. What sight?
Val. Alas, I should be glad to hide it;
But it is——
Horatia. What?
Val. Your brother wears in triumph
The very scarf I bore to Curiatius.
Horatia. [*Wildly.*] Ye gods, I thank ye! 'tis with joy I hear it.
If I should falter now, that sight would rouse
My drooping rage, and swell the tempest louder.
——But soft; they may prevent me; wild passion
Betrays my purpose.——I'll dissemble with them.
[*She sits down.*
Val. She softens now.
Valeria. How do you, my Horatia?
Horatia. Alas, my friend, 'tis madness which I utter——
Since you persuade me then, I will not go.
But leave me to myself; I would sit here;
Alone in silent sadness pour my tears,
And meditate on my unheard of woes.
Val. [*To Valeria.*] 'Twere well to humour this. But may she not,
If left alone, do outrage on herself?
Valeria. I have prevented that; she has not near her
One instrument of death.
Val. Retire we then.
But, Oh, not far, for now I feel my soul
Still more perplexed with love. Who knows, Valeria,
But when this storm of grief has blown its fill,
She may grow calm, and listen to my vows?
[*Exeunt Valerius and Valeria.*

After a short silence, HORATIA *rises and comes forward.*

Horatia. Yes, they are gone; and now be firm, my soul!
This way I can elude their search. The heart,
Which doats like mine, must break to be at ease.
Just now I thought, had Curiatius lived,
I could have driven him from my breast for ever.
But death has cancelled all my wrongs at once.
——They were not wrongs; 'twas virtue which undid us;
And virtue shall unite us in the grave.

I heard them say, as they departed hence,
That they had robbed me of all means of death.
Vain thought! they knew not half Horatia's purpose.
Be resolute, my brother; let no weak
Unmanly fondness mingle with thy virtue,
And I will touch thee nearly. Oh, come on,
'Tis thou alone canst give Horatia peace. [*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A street of Rome.*

Chorus of Youths and Virgins singing, and scattering branches of oak, flowers, &c. Then enters HORATIUS, *leaning on the arm of* PUBLIUS HORATIUS.

Chorus. *Thus, for freedom nobly won,*
Rome her hasty tribute pours;
And on one victorious son
Half exhausts her blooming stores.

A Youth. *Scatter here the laurel crown,*
Emblem of immortal praise!
Wondrous youth! to thy renown
Future times shall altars raise.

A Virgin. *Scatter here the myrtle wreath,*
Though the bloodless victor's due;
Grateful thousands saved from death
Shall devote that wreath to you.

A Youth. *Scatter here the oaken bough;*
Even for one averted fate,
We that civic meed bestow——
He saved all who saved the state.

Chorus. *Thus, for freedom, &c.*

Hor. Thou dost forgive me then, my dearest boy?
I cannot tell thee half my ecstasy.
The day which gave thee first to my glad hopes
Was misery to this——I'm mad with transport!
Why are ye silent there? Again renew
Your songs of praise, and in a louder strain
Pour forth your joy, and tell the listening spheres
That Rome is freed by my Horatius' hand.
Pub. No more, my friends.——You must perme, sir,
To contradict you here. Not but my soul,
Like yours, is open to the charms of praise:
There is no joy beyond it, when the mind
Of him, who hears it, can with honest pride
Confess it just, and listen to its music.
But now the toils I have sustained require
Their interval of rest, and every sense
Is deaf to pleasure——Let me leave you, friends;
We're near our home, and would be private now:
To-morrow we'll expect your kind attendance,
To share our joys, and waft our thanks to heaven.

As they are going off, HORATIA *rushes in.*

Horatia. Where is this mighty chief?
Hor. My daughter's voice!
I bade her come; she has forgot her sorrows,
And is again my child.
Horatia. Is this the hero
That trample's nature's ties, and nobly soars
Above the dictates of humanity?
Let me observe him well.
Pub. What means my sister?
Horatia. Thy sister! I disclaim the impious title;
Base and inhuman! Give me back my husband,
My life, my soul, my murdered Curiatius!
Pub. He perished for his country.
Horatia. Gracious gods!
Was't not enough that thou hadst murdered him,
But thou must triumph in thy guilt, and wear
His bleeding spoils?—Oh, let me tear them from thee,
Drink the dear drops that issued from his wounds,
More dear to me than the whole tide that swells
With impious pride a hostile brother's heart!
Hor. Am I awake, or is it all illusion!
Was it for this thou cam'st!
Pub. Horatia, hear me;
Yet I am calm, and can forgive thy folly;
Would I could call it by no harsher name!
But do not tempt me farther. Go, my sister,
Go hide thee from the world, nor let a Roman
Know with what insolence thou darest avow
Thy infamy, or what is more, my shame,
How tamely I forgave it. Go, Horatia.
Horatia. I will not go. What, have I touched thee, then?
And canst thou feel?—Oh, think not thou shalt lose
Thy share of anguish. I'll pursue thee still,
Urge thee all day with thy unnatural crimes,
Tear, harrow up thy breast; and then at night
I'll be the fury that shall haunt thy dreams,
Wake thee with shrieks, and place before thy sight
Thy mangled friends in all their pomp of horror.
Pub. Away with her! 'tis womanish complaining.
Think'st thou such trifles can alarm the man,
Whose noblest passion is his country's love?
—Let it be thine, and learn to bear affliction.
Horatia. Curse on my country's love! the trick ye teach us
To make us slaves beneath the mask of virtue;
To rob us of each soft endearing sense,
And violate the first great law within us.
I scorn the impious passion.
Pub. Have a care;

Thou'st touched a string which may awake my vengeance.
Horatia. [*Aside.*] Then it shall do it.
Pub. Oh, if thou dar'st prophane
That sacred tie which winds about my heart,
By Heaven I swear, by the great gods who rule
The fate of empires, 'tis not this fond weakness
Which hangs upon me, and retards my justice,
Nor even thy sex, which shall protect thee from me. [*Clapping his hand on his sword.*
Hor. Drag her away—thou'lt make me curse thee, girl——
Indeed she's mad. [*To Publius.*
Horatia. Stand off, I am not mad——
Nay, draw thy sword; I do defy thee, murderer,
Barbarian, Roman!—Mad! The name of Rome
Makes madmen of you all; my curses on it!
I do detest its impious policy.
Rise, rise, ye states! (oh, that my voice could fire
Your tardy wrath!) confound its selfish greatness,
Raze its proud walls, and lay its towers in ashes!
Pub. I'll bear no more——
[*Drawing his sword.*
Hor. Distraction!—Force her off——
Horatia. [*Struggling.*] Could I but prove the Helen to destroy
This cursed unsocial state, I'd die with transport:
Gaze on the spreading fires—till the last pile
Sunk in the blaze—then mingle with its ruins.
Pub. Thou shalt not live to that.
[*Exit after her.*
Thus perish all the enemies of Rome! [*Without.*

Re-enter VALERIUS.

Val. Oh, horror! horror! execrable act!
If there be law in Rome; if there be justice,
By Rome, and all its gods, thou shalt not 'scape.
[*Exit.*

Re-enter PUBLIUS, *followed by* HORATIA *wounded.*

Horatia. Now thou'st indeed been kind, and I forgive you
The death of Curiatius; this last blow
Has cancelled all, and thou'rt again my brother.
Hor. Heavens! what a sight!
A daughter bleeding by a brother's hand!
My child! my child!
Horatia. What means this tenderness? I thought to see you
Inflamed with rage against a worthless wretch,
Who has dishonoured your illustrious race,
And stained its brightest fame: in pity look not
Thus kindly on me, for I have injured you.
Hor. Thou hast not, girl;
I said 'twas madness, but he would not hear me.
Horatia. Oh, wrong him not; his act was noble justice;
I forced him to the deed; for know, my father,
It was not madness, but the firm result
Of settled reason, and deliberate thought.
I was resolved on death, and witness, Heaven,
I'd not have died by any hand but his,
For the whole round of fame his worth shall boast
Through future ages.
Hor. What hast thou said? Wert thou so bent on death?
Was all thy rage dissembled?
Horatia. Alas! my father!
All but my love was false; what that inspired
I uttered freely.
But for the rest, the curses which I poured
On heaven-defended Rome, were merely lures
To tempt his rage, and perfect my destruction:
Heaven! with what transport I beheld him moved!
How my heart leaped to meet the welcome point,
Stained with the life-blood of my Curiatius!
Cementing thus our union even in death.
Pub. My sister, live! I charge thee live, Horatia!
Oh, thou hast planted daggers here.
Horatia. My brother!
Can you forgive me too? then I am happy.
I dared not hope for that. Ye gentle ghosts,
That rove Elysium, hear the sacred sound!
My father and my brother both forgive me!
I have again their sanction on my love.
Oh, let me hasten to those happier climes,
Where, unmolested, we shall share our joys,
Nor Rome, nor Alba, shall disturb us more.
[*Dies.*
Hor. 'Tis gone, the prop, the comfort of my age.
Let me reflect; this morn I had four children,
No happier father hailed the sun's uprising:
Now, I have none, for, Publius, thou must die:
Blood calls for blood—to expiate one parricide,
Justice demands another—Art thou ready?
Pub. Strike! 'tis the consummation of my wishes
To die, and by your hand.
Hor. Oh, blind old man!
Wouldst thou lift up thy sacrilegious hand
Against the chief, the god, that saved thy country?
There's something in that face that awes my soul,
Like a divinity. Hence, thou vile weapon,
Disgrace my hand no more.
[*A cry without.* Justice! Justice!]
What noise is that?

Enter VOLSCINIUS.

Vols. All Rome, my lord, has taken the alarm, and crowds
Of citizens, enraged, are posting hither,
To call for justice on the head of Publius.
Hor. Ungrateful men! how dare they? Let them come.

Enter TULLUS, VALERIUS, *and Citizens.*

Val. See, fellow-citizens, see where she lies,
The bleeding victim.
Tul. Stop, unmannered youth!

Think'st thou we know not wherefore we are here?
Seest thou yon drooping sire?
Hor. Permit them, sir.
Tul. What would you, Romans?
Val. We are come, dread sir,
In the behalf of murdered innocence;
Murdered by him, the man——
Hor. Whose conquering arm
Has saved you all from ruin. Oh, shame! shame!
Has Rome no gratitude? Do ye not blush
To think whom your insatiate rage pursues?
Down, down, and worship him.
1st Citizen. Does he plead for him?
2d Citizen. Does he forgive his daughter's death?
Hor. He does,
And glories in it, glories in the thought
That there's one Roman left who dares be grateful;
If you are wronged, then what am I? Must I
Be taught my duty by the affected tears
Of strangers to my blood? Had I been wronged,
I know a father's right, and had not asked
This ready-talking sir to bellow for me,
And mouth my wrongs in Rome.
Val. Friends, countrymen, regard not what he says;
Stop, stop your ears, nor hear a frantic father
Thus plead against his child.
Hor. He does belie me.
What child have I? Alas, I have but one!
And him you would tear from me.
All Citizens. Hear him! hear him!
Pub. No; let me speak. Think'st thou, ungrateful youth,
To hurt my quiet? I am hurt beyond
Thy power to harm me. Death's extremest tortures
Were happiness to what I feel. Yet know,
My injured honour bids me live; nay, more,
It bids me even descend to plead for life.
But wherefore waste I words? 'Tis not to him,
But you, my countrymen, to you, I speak;
He loved the maid.
1st Citizen. How! loved her!
Pub. Fondly loved her;
And, under shew of public justice, screens
A private passion, and a mean revenge.
Think you, I loved her not? High Heaven's my witness
How tenderly I loved her; and the pangs
I feel this moment, could you see my heart,
Would prove too plainly I am still her brother.
1st Citizen. He shall be saved.
Valerius has misled us.
All Citizens. Save him! save him!
Tul. If yet a doubt remains,
Behold that virtuous father, who could boast,
This very morn, a numerous progeny,
The dear supports of his declining age;
Then read the sad reverse with pitying eyes,
And tell your conscious hearts they fell for you.
Hor. I am overpaid by that, nor claim I aught
On their accounts; by high Heaven, I swear,
I'd rather see him added to the heap,
Than Rome enslaved.
1st Citizen. Oh, excellent Horatius!
All Citizens. Save him! save him!
Tul. Then I pronounce him free. And now, Horatius,
The evening of thy stormy day at last
Shall close in peace. Here, take him to thy breast!
Hor. My son, my conqueror! 'twas a fatal stroke,
But shall not wound our peace. This kind embrace
Shall spread a sweet oblivion o'er our sorrows;
Or, if in after times, though 'tis not long
That I shall trouble you, some sad remembrance
Should steal a sigh, and peevish age forget
Its resolution, only boldly say,
Thou sav'dst the state, and I'll intreat forgiveness.
Learn hence, ye Romans, on how sure a base
The patriot builds his happiness;
Grief may to grief in endless round succeed,
And nature suffer when our children bleed;
But still superior must that hero prove,
Whose first, best passion, is his country's love.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

THE
BROTHERS.

BY

YOUNG.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

PHILIP, *king of Macedon.*
PERSEUS, *his elder son.*
DEMETRIUS, *his younger son,*
PERICLES, *the friend of Perseus.*
ANTIGONUS, *a minister of state.*
DYMAS, *the king's favourite.*

POSTHUMIUS, CURTIUS, } *Roman ambassadors.*

WOMEN.

ERIXENE, *the Thracian princess.*
Her attendant.

Scene,—Macedon.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter CURTIUS *and* POSTHUMIUS.

Cur. THERE's something of magnificence about us,
I have not seen at Rome. But you can tell me.
[*Gazes round.*
Post. True: hither sent on former embassies,
I know this splendid court of Macedon,
And haughty Philip, well.
Cur. His pride presumes
To treat us here like subjects more than Romans,
More than ambassadors, who in our bosoms
Bear peace and war, and throw him which we please,
As Jove his storm, or sunshine, on his creatures.
Post. This Philip only, since Rome's glory rose,
Preserves its grandeur to the name of king;
Like a bold star, that shews its fires by day.
The Greek, who won the world, was sent before him,
As the grey dawn before the blaze of noon:
Philip had ne'er been conquered, but by Rome;
And what can fame say more of mortal man?
Cur. I know his public character.
Post. It pains me
To turn my thought on his domestic state.
There Philip is no god; but pours his heart,
In ceaseless groans, o'er his contending sons;
And pays the secret tax of mighty men
To their mortality.
Cur. But whence this strife,
Which thus afflicts him?
Post. From this Philip's bed
Two Alexanders spring.
Cur. And but one world?
'Twill never do.
Post. They both are bright; but one,
Benignly bright, as stars to mariners;
And one a comet, with malignant blaze,
Denouncing ruin.
Cur. You mean Perseus.
Post. True.
The younger son, Demetrius, you well know,

Was bred at Rome, our hostage from his father.
Soon after, he was sent ambassador,
When Philip feared the thunder of our arms.
Rome's manners won him, and his manners Rome;
Who granted peace, declaring she forgave
To his high worth the conduct of his father.
This gave him all the hearts of Macedon;
Which, joined to his high patronage from Rome,
Inflames his jealous brother.
Cur. Glows there not
A second brand of enmity?
Post. O yes;
The fair Erixene.
Cur. I've partly heard
Her smothered story.
Post. Smothered by the king;
And wisely too: but thou shalt hear it all.
Not seas of adamant, not mountains whelmed
On guilty secrets, can exclude the day.
Long burnt a fixed hereditary hate
Between the crowns of Macedon and Thrace;
The sword by both too much indulged in blood.
Philip, at length, prevailed; he took, by night,
The town and palace of his deadly foe;
Rushed through the flames, which he had kindled round,
And slew him, bold in vain; nor rested there;
But, with unkingly cruelty, destroyed
Two little sons within their mother's arms;
Thus meaning to tread out those sparks of war,
Which might one day flame up to strong revenge.
The queen, through grief, on her dead sons expired.
One child alone survived; a female infant,
Amidst these horrors, in the cradle smiled.
Cur. What of that infant?
Post. Stung with sharp remorse,
The victor took, and gave her to his queen.
The child was bred, and honoured as her own;
She grew, she bloomed; and now her eyes repay
Her brothers' wounds, on Philip's rival sons.
Cur. Is, then, Erixene that Thracian child?
How just the gods! from out that ruined house
He took a brand, to set his own on fire.
Post. To give thee, friend, the whole in miniature,
This is the picture of great Philip's court:
The proud, but melancholy king, on high,
Majestic sits, like Jove, enthroned in darkness;
His sons are as the thunder in his hand;
And the fair Thracian princess is a star,
That sparkles by, and gilds the solemn scene.
[*Shouts heard.*
'Tis their great day, supreme of all their year,
The famed lustration of their martial powers;
Thence, for our audience, chosen by the king.
If he provokes a war, his empire shakes,
And all her lofty glories nod to ruin.
Cur. Who comes?
Post. O, that's the jealous elder brother!
Irregular in manners, as in form.
Observe the fire, high birth and empire kindle!

Cur. He holds his conference with much emotion.
Post. The brothers both can talk, and, in their turn,
Have borne away the prize of eloquence
At Athens. Shun his walk: our own debate
Is now at hand. We'll seek his lion sire,
Who dares to frown on us, his conquerors;
And carries so much monarch on his brow,
As if he'd fright us with the wounds, we gave him. [*Exeunt.*

Enter PERSEUS *and* PERICLES.

Per. 'Tis empire! empire! empire! let that word
Make sacred all I do, or can attempt!
Had I been born a slave, I should affect it;
My nature's fiery, and, of course, aspires.
Who gives an empire, by the gift defeats
All end of giving; and procures contempt
Instead of gratitude. An empire lost,
Destroyed, would less confound me, than resigned.
Peri. But are you sure Demetrius will attempt?
Per. Why does Rome court him? For his virtues? No.
To fire him to dominion; to blow up
A civil war; then to support him in it:
He gains the name of king, and Rome the power.
Peri. This is, indeed, the common art of Rome.
Per. That source of justice through the wondring world!
His youth and valour second Rome's designs:
The first impels him to presumptuous hope;
The last supports him in it. Then his person!
Thy hand, O Nature, has made bold with mine.
Yet more! what words distill from his red lip,
To gull the multitude! and they make kings.
Ten thousand fools, knaves, cowards, lumped together,
Become all wise, all righteous, and almighty!
Nor is this all: the foolish Thracian maid
Prefers the boy to me!
Peri. And does that pain you?
Per. O Pericles, to death! It is most true,
Through hate to him, and not through love for her,
I paid my first addresses; but became
The fool I feigned: my sighs are now sincere.
It smarts; it burns: O that 'twere fiction still!
By Heaven, she seems more beauteous than dominion!
Peri. Dominion and the princess both are lost,
Unless you gain the king.
Per. But how to gain him?
Old men love novelties; the last arrived
Still pleases best; the youngest steals their smiles.
Peri. Dymas alone can work him to his pleasure;
First in esteem, and keeper of his heart.
Per. To Dymas thou; and win him to thy will:
In the mean time, I'll seek my double rival;

Curb his presumption, and erect myself
In all the dignity of birth before him.
Whate'er can stir the blood, or sway the mind,
Is now at stake; and double is the loss,
When an inferior bears away the prize.
Peri. Your brother, dressed for the solemnity!
Per. To Dymas fly! gain him, and think on this:
A prince, indebted, is a fortune made.
[*Exit Pericles.*

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. How, brother! unattired? Have you forgot
What pomps are due to this illustrious day?
Per. I am no gew-gaw for the throng to gaze at:
Some are designed by nature but for shew;
The tinsel and the feather of mankind.
Dem. Brother, of that no more: for shame, gird on
Your glittering arms, and look like any Roman.
Per. No, brother, let the Romans look like me,
If they're ambitious. But, I prithee, stand;
Let me gaze on thee:—No inglorious figure!
More Romano, as it ought to be.
But what is this, that dazzles my weak sight?
There's sunshine in thy beaver.
Dem. 'Tis that helmet,
Which Alexander wore at Granicus.
Per. When he subdued the world? Ha! is't not so?
What world hast thou subdued? O yes, the fair!
Think'st thou there could, in Macedon, be found
No brow might suit that golden blaze but thine?
Dem. I wore it but to grace this sacred day:
Jar not for trifles.
Per. Nothing is a trifle,
That argues the presumption of the soul.
Dem. 'Tis they presume, who know not to deserve.
Per. Or who, deserving, scorn superior merit.
Dem. Who combats with a brother, wounds himself:
Wave private wrath, and rush upon the foes
Of Macedon.
Per. No; I would not wound
Demetrius' friends.
Dem. Demetrius' friends!
Per. The Romans!
You copy Hannibal, our great ally:
Say, at what altar was you sworn their foe?
Peace-making brother! Wherefore bring you peace,
But to prevent my glory from the field?
The peace, you bring, was meant as war to me.
Dem. Perseus, be bold when danger's all your own:
War now, were war with Philip more than Rome.
Per. Come, you love peace; that fair cheek hates a scar!
You, that admire the Romans, break the bridge
With Cocles, or with Curtius leap the gulph;
And league not with the vices of our foes.
Dem. What vices?
Per. With their women and their wits.
Your idol Lælius, Lælius the polite.
I hear, sir, you take wing, and mount in metre.
Terence has owned your aid, your comrade Terence.
God-like ambition! Terence there, the slave!
Dem. At Athens bred, and to the arts a foe?
Per. At Athens bred, and borrow arts from Rome?
Dem. Brother, I've done: let our contention cease:
Our mother shudders at it in her grave!
And how has Philip mourned? a dreadful foe,
And awful king; but, oh! the tenderest parent,
That ever wept, in fondness, o'er a child!
Per. Why, ay, go tell your father; fondly throw
Your arms around him; stroke him to your purpose,
As you are wont: I boast not so much worth;
I am no picture, by the doating eye
To be surveyed, and hung about his neck!
I fight his battles; that's all I can do.
But, if you boast a piety sincere,
One way you may secure your father's peace;
And one alone—resign Erixene.
Dem. You flatter me, to think her in my power.
We run our fates together: you deserve,
And she can judge: proceed we, then, like friends;
And he, who gains her heart, and gains it fairly,
Let him enjoy his generous rival's too.
Per. Smooth-speaking, insincere, insulting boy!
Is, then, my crown usurped but half thy crime?
Desist; or by the gods, that smile on blood,
Not thy fine form, nor yet thy boasted peace,
Nor patronizing Rome, nor Philip's tears,
Nor Alexander's helmet; no, nor more,
His radiant form, should it alight in thunder,
And spread its new divinity between us,
Should save a brother from a brother's fury!
[*Exit.*
Dem. How's this? the waves ne'er ran thus high before;
Resign thee! yes, Erixene, with life!
Thou, in whose eyes, so modest, and so bright,
Love ever wakes, and keeps a vestal fire;
Ne'er shall I wean my fond, fond heart from thee!
But Perseus warns me to rouse all my powers.
As yet I float in dark uncertainty;
For though she smiles, I sound not her designs:
I'll fly, fall, tremble, weep upon her feet;
And learn (O all ye gods!) my final doom!
My father! ha! and on his brow deep thought
And pale concern! Kind Heaven assuage his sorrows,
Which strike a damp through all my flames of love! [*Exit.*

Enter KING *and* ANTIGONUS.

King. Kings of their envy cheat a foolish world:
Fate gives us all in spite, that we alone
Might have the pain of knowing all is nothing!
The seeming means of bliss but heighten woe,
When impotent to make their promise good:
Hence, kings, at least, bid fairest to be wretched.
Ant. True, sir; 'tis empty, or tormenting, all;
The days of life are sisters; all alike:
None just the same; which serves to fool us on
Through blasted hopes with change of fallacy:
While joy is like to-morrow, still to come;
Nor ends the fruitless chace but in the grave!
King. Ay, there, Antigonus, this pain will cease,
Which meets me at my banquet; haunts my pillow;
Nor, by the din of arms, is frighted from me!
Conscience, what art thou? though tremendous power!
Who dost inhabit us without our leave;
And art, within ourselves, another self,
A master self, that loves to domineer,
And treat the monarch frankly as the slave.
How dost thou light a torch to distant deeds!
Make the past present, and the future frown!
How, ever and anon, awake the soul,
As with a peal of thunder, to strange horrors,
In this long restless dream, which idiots hug,
Nay, wise men flatter with the name of life?
Ant. You think too much.
King. I do not think at all:
The gods impose, the gods inflict, my thoughts,
And paint my dreams with images of dread!
Last night, in sleep, I saw the Thracian queen
And her two murdered sons. She frowned upon me,
And pointed at their wounds! How throbbed my heart!
How shook my couch! and when the morning came,
The formidable picture still subsisted,
And slowly vanished from my waking eye!
I fear some heavy vengeance hangs in air,
And conscious deities infuse these thoughts,
To warn my soul of her approaching doom!
The gods are rigid, when they weigh such deeds
As speak a ruthless heart; they measure blood
By drops; and bate not one in the repay!
Could infants hurt me? 'Twas not like a king!
Ant. My lord, I do confess the gods are with us;
Stand at our side in every act of life,
And on our pillow watch each secret thought;
Nay, see it in its embryo, yet unborn.
But their wrath ceases on remorse for guilt:
And well I know your sorrows touch your sons;
Nor is it possible but time must quench
Their flaming spirits in a father's tears.
King. Vain comfort! I this moment overheard
My jarring sons, with fury, shake my walls.
Ah! why my curse from those, who ought to bless me!
The queen of Thrace can answer that sad question.
She had two sons; but two: and so have I.
Misfortune stands with her bow ever bent
Over the world; and he, who wounds another,
Directs the goddess, by that part he wounds,
Where to strike deep her arrows in himself,
Ant. I own, I think it time your sons receive
A father's awful counsel; or, while here,
Now weary nature calls for kind repose,
Your curtains will be shaken with their broils:
And, when you die, sons' blood may stain your tomb!
But other cares demand you now:—the Romans!
King. O change of pain! the Romans? Perish Rome!
Thrice happy they, who sleep in humble life,
Beneath the storm ambition blows. 'Tis meet
The great should have the fame of happiness,
The consolation of a little envy;
'Tis all their pay for those superior cares,
Those pangs of heart, their vassals ne'er can feel.
Where are these strangers? First I'll hear their tale;
Then talk in private with my sons.
Ant. But how
Intends my lord to make his peace with Rome?
King. Rome calls me fiery: let them find me so.
Ant. O, sir, forbear! Too late you felt Rome's power.
King. Yes, and that reason stings me more than ever,
To curse, and hate, and hazard all against her.
Ant. Hate her too much to give her battle now;
Nor to your god-like valour owe your ruin.
Greece, Thessaly, Illyrium, Rome has seized;
Your treasures wasted, and your phalanx thinned;
Should she proceed, and strike at Macedon,
What would be left of empire?
King. Philip: all.
I'll take my throne.—Send in these foreigners.

[*The Scene draws, and discovers a magnificent Throne,* PERSEUS, DEMETRIUS, *Courtiers, &c. attending.* POSTHUMIUS *and* CURTIUS, *the Roman ambassadors, enter. Trumpets sound. The king ascends the throne.*]

Post. Philip of Macedon, to those complaints
Our friends groan out, and you have heard at large,
Rome now expects an answer. She sits judge,
And will have right on earth.
King. Expects an answer!
I so shall answer as becomes a king.
Post. Or more, sir; as becomes a friend of Rome.
King. Or Alexander's heir, to rise still higher,
But to the purpose. Thus a king to those,

That would make kings, and puff them out at pleasure:
Has Philip done amiss? 'Twas you provoked him.
My cities, which deserted in my wars,
I though it meet to punish: you denied me.
When I had shook the walls of Marena,
You plucked me thence, and took the taken town.
Then you sent word I should retire from Greece,
A conquest at my door, by nature mine—
And said, 'here end thy realm;' as ye were Gods!
And Gods ye shall be, ere Rome humbles me.
All this is done; yet Philip is your friend!
If this buys friendship, where can ye find foes?
In what regard will stern Rome look upon me?
If as a friend, too precious let her hold
Her own esteem, to cast a stain on mine:
If as an enemy, let her proceed,
And do as she has done; she needs no more.
Post. The Romans do no wrong; yet still are men;
And if to-day an error thwarts their purpose,
To-morrow sets it right. If Philip loves
Dominion, and the pride, that waits on kings,
(Of which, perhaps, his words too strongly savour)
Humility to Rome will lead him to it.
She can give more than common kings can govern.
King. Than common kings? Ambassador! remember
Cannæ—where first my sword was flushed with blood.
Dem. My lord, forbear. [*Aside to the king.*
King. And Hannibal still lives.
Post. Because he fled at Capua.
King. There, indeed,
I was not with him.
Post. Therefore he fled alone.—
Since thus you treat us, hear another charge.
Why here detain you, prisoner of your power,
His daughter, who was once Rome's good ally,
The king of Thrace! Why is she not restored?
For our next meeting you'll provide an answer.
What now has past, for his sake, we forgive.
[*Pointing to Demetrius.*
But mark this well: there lies some little distance,
Philip, between a Roman and a king.
[*Exeunt Romans.*
King. How say'st, unsceptered boaster? This to me!
With Hannibal I cleft yon Alpine rocks;
With Hannibal choaked Thrasymene with slaughter:
But, O the night of Cannæ's raging field!
When half the Roman senate lay in blood
Without our tent, and groaned as we caroused!
Immortal Gods! for such another hour!
Then throw my carcase to the dogs of Rome.
Ant. Sir, you forget your sons.
King. Let all withdraw.
[*Exeunt all but the king and his sons.*
Two passions only take up all my soul;
Hatred to Rome, and tenderness for them.
Draw near, my sons, and listen to my age.
By what has past, you see the state of things.
Foreign alliance must a king secure,
And insolence sustain to serve his power.
And if alliances with Rome are needful,
Much more among ourselves. If I must bear,
Unmoved, an insult from a stranger's brow,
Shall not a brother bear a brother's look
Without impatience? Whither all this tends,
I'm sorry that your conscious hearts can tell you:
Is it not most severe? Two sons alone
Have crowned my bed; and they two are not brothers.
Look here, and, from my kind regards to you,
Copy such looks as you should bear each other.
Why do I sigh? Do you not know, my sons?
And if you do—O let me sigh no more!
Let these white hairs put in a claim to peace!
Per. Henceforth, my sole contention with my brother
Is this; which best obeys our father's will.
Dem. Father, if simple nature ever speaks
In her own language, scorning useless words,
You see her now; she swells into my eyes.
I take thee to my heart: I fold thee in it.
[*Embracing Perseus.*
Our father bids; and that we drink one milk,
Is now the smallest motive of my love.
King. Antigonus, the joy their mother felt,
When they were born, was faint to what I feel.
Dem. See, brother, if he does not weep! His love
Runs o'er in venerable tears. I'm rude:
But nature will prevail—My king! My father!
Per. Now cannot I let fall a single tear.
[*Aside.*
King. See! the good man has caught it too.
Ant. Such tears,
And such alone, be shed in Macedonia!
King. Be not thou, Perseus, jealous of thy brother;
Nor thou, Demetrius, prone to give him cause;
Nor either think of empire, till I'm dead.
You need not; you reign now; my heart is your's;
Sheath your resentments in your father's peace;
Come to my bosom both, and swear it there.
[*Embracing his sons.*
Ant. Look down, ye gods, and change me, if you can,
This sight for one more lovely! What so sweet,
So beautiful, on earth, and, ah! so rare,
As kindred love, and family repose?
This, this alliance, Rome, will quite undo thee.
See this, proud Eastern monarchs, and look pale!
Armies are routed, realms o'er-run by this.
King. Or if leagued worlds superior forces bring,
I'd rather die a father than a king.
Fathers alone a father's heart can know;

What secret tides of still enjoyment flow,
When brothers love; but if their hate succeeds,
They wage the war; but 'tis the father bleeds.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT. II.

SCENE I.

Enter PERSEUS.

Per. WHY loiters my ambasador to Dymas?
His greatness will not, sure, presume to scorn
A friendship, offered from an heir of empire!
But Pericles returns.

Enter PERICLES.

Is Dymas our's?

Peri. He's cautious, sir; he's subtle; he's a courtier.
Dymas is now for you, now for your brother;
For both, and neither: he's a summer-insect,
And loves the sunshine: on his gilded wings,
While the scales waver, he'll fly doubtful round you,
And sing his flatteries to both alike:
The scales once fixed, he'll settle on the winner,
And swear his prayers drew down the victory—
But what success had you, sir, with your brother?

Per. All, all my hopes are at the point of death!
The boy triumphant keeps his hold in love:
He's ever warbling nonsense in her ear
With all the intoxication of success.
Darkness incloses me; nor see I light
From any quarter dawn, but from his death.

Peri. Why start at his death, who resolves on your's?

Per. Resolves on mine!

Peri. Have you not marked the princess?
You have: with what a beam of majesty
Her eye strikes sacred awe! It speaks her mind
Exalted, as it is. Whom loves she then?
Demetrius? No; Rome's darling; who, no doubt,
Dares court her with your empire. And shall Perseus
Survive that loss?—Thus he resolves your death.

Per. Most true. What crime then to strike first? But how?
Or when? or where? O Pericles! assist me.

Peri. 'Tis dangerous.

Per. The fitter for me.

Peri. Wait an occasion, that befriends your wishes.

Per. Go, fool, and teach a cataract to creep!
Can thirst of empire, vengeance, beauty, wait?

Peri. In the mean time, accept a stratagem,
That must secure your empire, or your love.
Your brother's Roman friendships gall no less
The king, than you: he dreads their consequence.
Dymas hates Rome; and Dymas has a daughter.
How can the king so powerfully fix
Demetrius' faith, as by his marriage there?
For Dymas thus, Rome's sworn, eternal foe,
Becomes a spy upon his private life,
And surety for his conduct.

Per. True—but thus
Our art defeats itself. My brother gains
The favourite, and so strengthens in his treason.

Peri. Think you he will wed her? No, the princess' eye
Makes no such short-lived conquest. He'll refuse,
And thus effect what I have strove in vain:
Yes, he'll refuse; and Dymas, in his wrath,
Will list for us, and vengeance. Then the king
Will, doubtless, much resent his son's refusal;
And thus we kindle the whole court against him.

Per. My precious friend, I thank thee. I take wing
On ardent hope: I think it cannot fail.
Go, make thy court to Dymas with this scheme:
Begone—Erixene! I'll feed her pride.
[*Looking out.*
Once more, but not expend my breath in vain.
This meeting stamps unalterable fate;
I will wed her, or vengeance——

Enter ERIXENE *and* DELIA.

O, Erixene!
O, Princess! colder than your Thracian snows!
See Perseus, who ne'er stooped but to the gods,
Prostrate before you. Fame and empire sue.
Why have I conquered? Because you are fair.
What's empire? but a title to adore you.
Why do I number in my lineage high
Heroes and gods? That you, scarce less divine,
Without a blush may listen to my vows.
My ancestor subdued the world. I dare
Beyond his pride, and grasp at more, in you.
Obdurate maid! or turn, or I expire.

Erix. If love, my lord, is choice, who loves in vain
Should blame himself alone; and if 'tis fate,
'Tis fate in all: why then your blame on me?
My crown's precarious, through the chance of war;
But sure my heart's my own. Each villager
Is queen of her affections, and can vent
Her arbitrary sighs, where'er she pleases.
Shall then the daughter of a race of kings——

Per. Madam, you justly blame the chance of war;
The gods have been unkind: I am not so.
No! Perseus comes to counterbalance fate.
Thrace ne'er was conquered——if you smile on me.
Silent! obdurate still! as cold as death!
But 'tis Demetrius——

Erix. Prince, I take your meaning.
But, if you truly think his worth prevails,
How strange is your request!
Per. No, madam, no:
Though love has hurt my mind, I still can judge
What springs controul the passions of the great.
Ambition is first minister of state;
Love's but a second in the cabinet:
Nor can he feather there his unfledged shaft
But from ambition's wing: but you conceive
More sanguine hopes from him, whom Rome supports,
Than me. You view Demetrius on my throne;
And thence he shines indeed! his charms from thence
Transpierce your soul, enamoured of dominion.
Erix. Why now you shew me your profound esteem!
Demetrius' guilt alone has charms for me;
'Tis not the prince, but traitor wins my love.
Such insults are not brooked by royal minds,
Howe'er their fortunes ebb; and though I mourn,
An orphan, and a captive, gods there are——
Fear then an orphan's, and a captive's wrong.
Per. Your cruel treatment of my passion——
But I'll not talk. This, madam; only this——
Think not the cause, the cursed cause of all,
Shall laugh secure, and triumph in my pangs.
No; by the torments of an heart on fire,
He gluts my vengeance, who defrauds my love!
[*Exit.*
Erix. What have I done! In what a whirlwind rage
Has snatched him hence on ill! I frown on Perseus,
And kill Demetrius.
Delia. Madam, see the prince.

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Erix. Ah, prince! the tempest, which so long has lowered,
Is now full ripe, and bursting o'er your head.
This moment Perseus' malice flamed before me;
Victorious rage broke through his wonted guard,
And menaced loud your ruin. Fly, O fly
This instant!
Dem. To what refuge?
Erix. Rome extends
Her longing arms to clasp you for her own.
Dem. Madam, 'tis prudent; I confess it is:
But is it loving as true lovers ought,
To be so very prudent in our love?
I boast not so much wisdom: I prefer
Death at your feet before the world without you.
Erix. In danger thus extreme——
Dem. Oh! most beloved!
Loved you like me, like me you would discern
That I but execute my brother's purpose
By such a flight. At that his clamour, rage,
And menace aim: to chase a rival hence,
And keep the field alone. Oh! shall I leave him
To gaze whole days; to learn to read your eye;
To study your delights, to chide the wind's
Too rude approach; to bid the ground be smooth;
To follow, like your shadow, where you go;
Tread in your steps; perhaps——to touch your hand!
O death! to minister in little things;
From half a glance to prophecy your will,
And do it, ere well formed in your own mind!
Gods! Gods! While worlds divide me from my princess,
That, should she call, Demetrius might grow old
Ere he could reach her feet!
Erix. If Perseus' love
Pains you, it pains me more. Is your heart grieved?
Mine is tormented: but since Philip's self
Is love's great advocate, a flat refusal
But blows their rage, and hastens your destruction.
Had I not that to fear! were you secure!
I would ease my bosom of its full disdain,
And dash this bold presumer on his birth.
But, see! the grand procession.
Dem. We must join it.

Enter the KING, PERSEUS, Romans, ANTIGONUS, *&c.*

King. Let the procession halt! and here be paid,
Before yon flaming altar, thanks to Heaven,
That brings us safe to this auspicious day!
The great lustration of our martial powers,
Which from its distant birth to present time
Unfolds the glories of this antient empire,
And throngs the pride of ages in an hour.
Post. What figure's that? O Philip! which precedes? [*Pointing.*
King. The founder of our empire, furious son
Of great Alcides. We are allied to Heaven;
And you, I think, call Romulus a god.
That, Philip, second of our name; and here——
O bend with awe to him, whose red right hand
Hurled proud Darius like a star from Heaven,
With lesser lights around him, flaming down,
And bid the laurelled sons of Macedonia
Drink their own Ganges!
Per. Give him his helmet, brother. [*Aside to Demetrius.*
King. You lead the troops that join in mock encounter:
And in no other way you ever meet! [*To his Sons.*
But march one way, and drive the world before you:
The victor, as our antient rites decree,
Must hold a feast, and triumph in the bowl.
Dem. I long, my lord, to see the charge begin;
The brandished faulchion, and the clashing helm:
Though but in sport, it is a sport for men.
Raw Alexander thus began his fame,
And overthrew Darius, first, at home.
We'll practise o'er the plans of future conquests,

While neighbouring nations tremble at our play,
And own the fault in fortune, not in us,
That we but want a foe to be immortal.
Per. You have supplied my wants: I thank you, brother.
King. [*Rising, and coming forward. Music.*] How vain all outward efforts to supply
The soul with joy! The noon-tide sun is dark,
And music discord, when the heart is low!
Avert its omen! what a damp hangs on me!
These sprightly, tuneful airs, but skim along
The surface of my soul, not enter there:
She does not dance to this enchanting sound.
How, like a broken instrument, beneath
The skilful touch, my joyless heart lies dead,
Nor answers to the master's hand divine!
Antig. When men once reach their autumn, sickly joys
Fall off apace, as yellow leaves from trees,
At every little breath misfortune blows;
Till, left quite naked of their happiness,
In the chill blasts of winter they expire.
This is the common lot. Have comfort, then:
Your grief will damp the triumph.
King. It is over.
Hear too; the trumpet calls us to the field,
And now this phantom of a fight begins.
Fair princess, you and I will go together,
As Priam and bright Helen did of old,
To view the war. Your eyes will make them bolder,
And raise the prize of victory itself.
[*All go out but Perseus, who has observed Demetrius and Erixene all this time conversing, and stays behind, thoughtful and disturbed.*
Per. Before my face she feeds him with her smiles:
The king looks on, nor disapproves the crime;
And the boy takes them as not due to me,
Without remorse, as happy as she'll make him.
Perish all three! I'll seek allies elsewhere;
Father and brother, nay, a mistress too.
Destruction, rise! Though thou art black as Night,
Thy mother, and as hideous as Despair,
I'll clasp thee thus, nor think of woman more.
How the boy doats, and drinks in at his eyes
Her poison! O to stab him in her arms!
And yet do less than they have done to me.

Enter PERICLES.

Peri. Where is my prince? The nation's on the wing;
No bosom but exults; no hand but bears
A garland or a trophy: and shall Perseus——
Per. Vengeance!
Peri. Hear how with shouts they rend the skies! [*Shouts within.*
Per. Give me my vengeance!
Peri. Forty thousand men,
In polished armour, shine against the sun.
Per. Dare but another word, and not of vengeance,
And I will use thee, as I would—my brother.
Peri. Vengeance! on whom?
Per. On him.
Peri. What vengeance?
Per. Blood.
Peri. 'Tis your's.
Per. What god will give it me?
Peri. Your own right hand.
Per. I dare not—for my father.
Peri. You shall dare.
Per. Shalt thou dare give encouragement to Perseus?
Unfold thy purpose; I'll outshoot the mark.
Peri. Where are you going?
Per. To the mock encounter.
Peri. What more like mock encounter than the true?
Per. Enough—He's dead! 'Twas accident; 'twas error.
No matter what. Ten thousand share the blame.
Peri. Hold, sir! I had forgot: on this occasion,
The troops are searched; and foils alone are worn,
Instead of swords.
Per. An osier were enough.
Who pains my heart, plants thunder in my hand.
Peri. But should this fail——
Per. Impossible!
Peri. But, should it,
The banquet follows.
Per. Poison in his wine!
I thank the gods! my spirits are revived!
I draw immortal vigour from that bowl!
Peri. Nay, should both fail, the field and banquet too,
All fails not; fairer hopes to fair succeed:
For know, my lord, the king received, with joy,
The marriage-scheme, and sent for Dymas' daughter.
Per. Then there's a second bowl of poison for him.
Peri. Yet more: this evening those ambassadors,
Which Philip sent to Rome, beneath the name
Of public business, but, in truth, to learn
Your brother's conduct, are expected home.
Per. Those whom I swore, before they parted hence,
In dreadful sacraments of wine and blood,
To bring back such reports as should destroy him:
And what if, to complete our secret plan,
We feign a letter to his friend the consul,
To strengthen our ambassadors' report?
Peri. That care, my lord, be mine: I know a knave,
Grown fat on forgery; he'll counterfeit
Old Quintius' hand and seal, by former letters
Sent to the king; which you can gain with ease.

Per. Observe—This morning, at their interview,
The Romans, in effect, informed the king,
That Thrace was theirs, and ordered him restore
The princess. This will give much air of truth,
If our forged letters say the Romans crown
Demetrius king of Thrace, and promise more.
Peri. My lord, it shall be done.
Per. All cannot fail. [*Trumpets.*
Peri. The trumpets sound: the troops are mounted.
Per. Vengeance!
Sweet vengeance calls: nor ever called a God
Such swift obedience: like the rapid wheel
I kindle in the course; I am there already;
Snatch the bright weapon; bound into my seat;
Strike; triumph; see him gasping on the ground,
And life, love, empire, springing from his wound.
When god-like ends, by means unjust, succeed,
The great result adorns the daring deed.
Virtue's a shackle, under fair disguise,
To fetter fools, while we bear off the prize.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter PERSEUS.

Per. Cowards in ill, like cowards in the field,
Are sure to be defeated. To strike home,
In both, is prudence: guilt, begun, must fly
To guilt consummate, to be safe.

Enter PERICLES.

Peri. My lord——
Per. Disturb not my devotions; they decline
The beaten track, the common track of prayer.
Ye powers of darkness! that rejoice in ill;
All sworn by Styx, with pestilential blasts
To wither every virtue in the bud;
To keep the door of dark conspiracy,
And snuff the grateful fumes of human blood!
From sulphur blue, or your red beds of fire,
On your black ebon thrones, auspicious rise;
And bursting through the barriers of this world,
Stand in dread contrast to the golden sun;
Fright day-light hence with your infernal smile;
And howl aloud your formidable joy,
While I transport you with the fair record
Of what your faithful minister has done,
Beyond your inspiration, self-impelled,
To spread your empire, and secure his own!
Hear, and applaud. Now, Pericles, proceed;
Speak, is the letter forged?
Peri. This moment; and might cheat
The cunning eye of jealousy itself.
Peri. 'Tis well: Art thou apprised of what hath passed
Since we last parted?
Per. No, my lord.
Per. Then rouse
Thy whole attention: here we are in private:
Know, then, my Pericles, the mock encounter
I turned, as taught by thee, to real rage.
But, blasted be the cowards, whom I led!
They trembled at a boy.
Peri. Ha!
Per. Mark me well:
The villains fled; but soon my prudence turned
To good account that momentary shame.
Thus——I pretend 'twas voluntary flight
To save a brother's blood; accusing him
As author of that conflict I declined,
And he pursued with ardour and success.
Peri. That's artful. What ensued?
Per. The banquet followed,
Held by the victor, as our rites require:
To which his easy nature, soon appeased,
Invited me. I went not; but sent spies
To learn what passed; which spies, by chance detected,
(Observe me) were ill used.
Peri. By whom? your brother?
Per. No; by his sons of riot. He soon after,
Not knowing that my servants were abused,
Kind, and gay-hearted, came to visit me.
They, who misused my spies, for self-defence,
Concealed their arms beneath the robes of peace.
Of this informed, again my genius served me.
Peri. You took occasion, from these few in arms,
To charge a murderous assault on all?
Per. True, Pericles; but mark my whole address:
Against my brother swift I bar my gates;
Fly to my father; and with artful tears
Accuse Demetrius; first, of turning sports,
And guiltless exercise, to mortal rage;
Then of inviting me (still blacker guilt!)
To smiling death in an envenomed bowl;
And last, that, both these failing, mad with rage,
He threw his schemes of baffled art aside,
And with armed men avowedly sought my life.
Peri. Three startling articles, and well-concerted,
Following each other in an easy train,
With fair similitude of truth! But, sir,
How bore your father?
Per. O! he shook! he fell!
Nor was his fleeting soul recalled with ease.
Peri. What said he when recovered?
Per. His resolve
I know not yet; but see, his minion comes;
And comes, perhaps, to tell me. But I'll go;
Sustain my part, and echo loud my wrongs.
Nought so like innocence as perfect guilt.

If he brings aught of moment, you'll inform me.
[*As Perseus goes off, he is seized by officers.*

Enter DYMAS.

Peri. How fares the king?
Dym. Even as an aged oak
Pushed to and fro, the labour of the storm;
Whose largest branches are struck off by thunder:
Yet still he loves, and on the mountain groans;
Strong in affliction, awful from his wounds,
And more revered in ruin than in glory.
Peri. I hear prince Perseus has accused his brother.
Dym. True; and the king's commands are now gone forth
To throw them both in chains; for farther thought
Makes Philip doubt the truth of Perseus' charge.
Peri. What then is his design?
Dym. They both this hour
Must plead their cause before him. Nay, already
His nobles, judges, counsellors, are met,
And public justice wears her sternest form:
A more momentous trial ne'er was known;
Whether the pleaders you survey as brothers,
Or princes known in arts, or famed for arms;
Whether you ponder, in their awful judge,
The tender parent, or the mighty king.
Greece, Athens, hears the cause: the great result
Is life, or death; is infamy, or fame. [*Trumpets.*
Peri. What trumpets these?
Dym. They summon to the court. [*Exeunt.*

The SCENE *draws, and discovers the Court,* KING, *&c.*

Enter DYMAS, *and takes his place by the* KING.

King. Bring forth the prisoners.
Strange trial this! Here sit I to debate,
Which vital limb to lop, nor that to save,
But render wretched life more wretched still.
What see I, but heaven's vengeance, in my sons?
Their guilt a scourge for mine? 'tis thus Heaven writes
Its awful meaning, plain in human deeds,
And language leaves to man.

Enter PERSEUS *and* DEMETRIUS, *in chains, from different sides of the stage;* PERSEUS *followed by* PERICLES, *and* DEMETRIUS *by* ANTIGONUS.

Dym. Dread, sir, your sons.
King. I have no sons; and that I ever had,
Is now my heaviest curse: and yet what care,
What pains, I took to curb their rising rage!
How often have I ranged through history,
To find examples for their private use?
The Theban brothers did I set before them——
What blood! what desolation! but in vain!
For thee, Demetrius, did I go to Rome,
And bring thee patterns thence of brothers' love,
The Quintii, and the Scipios; but in vain:
If I'm a monarch, where is your obedience?
If I'm a father, where's your duty to me?
If old, your veneration due to years?
But I have wept, and you have sworn, in vain!
I had your ear, and enmity your heart.
How was this morning's counsel thrown away!
How happy is your mother in the grave!
She, when she bore you, suffered less: her pangs,
Her pungent pangs, throb through the father's heart.
Dem. You can't condemn me, sir, to worse than this.
King. Than what, thou young deceiver? While I live,
You both, with impious wishes, grasp my sceptre:
Nothing is sacred, nothing dear, but empire.
Brother, nor father, can you bear; fierce lust
Of empire burns, extinguished all beside.
Why pant you for it? to give others awe?
Be therefore awed yourselves, and tremble at it,
While in a father's hand.
Dym. My lord, your warmth
Defers the business.
King. Am I then too warm?
They that should shelter me from every blast,
To be themselves the storm! O! how Rome triumphs!
Oh! how they bring this hoary head to shame!
Conquest and fame, the labour of my life,
Now turn against me, and call in the world
To gaze at what was Philip, but who now
Wants even the wretch's privilege—a wish.
What can I wish? Demetrius may be guiltless.
What then is Perseus? Judgment hangs as yet
Doubtful o'er them; but I'm condemned already;
For both are mine; and one—is foul as hell.
Should these two hands wage war, (these hands less dear!)
What boots it which prevails? In both I bleed.
But I have done. Speak, Perseus, and at large;
You'll have no second hearing. Thou forbear.
[*To Demetrius.*
Per. Speak!—'Twas with utmost struggle I forbore:
These chains were scarce designed to reach my tongue.
Their trespass is sufficient, stopping here.
[*Shewing his arms.*
These chains! for what? Are chains for innocence?
Not so; for, see, Demetrius wears them too.
Fool that I was to tremble at vain laws,
Nor learn from him defiance of their frown;
Since innocence and guilt are used alike,
Blood-thirsty stabbers, and their destined prey;
Perseus, and he——I will not call him brother:
[*Pointing at Demetrius.*
He wants not that enhancement of his guilt.
King. But closer to the point; and lay before us
Your whole deportment this ill-fated day.

Per. Scarce was he cool from that embrace this morning,
Which you enjoined, and I sincerely gave;
Nor thought he planned my death within my arms;
When, holding vile, oaths, honour, duty, love,
He fired our friendly sports to martial rage.
If war, why not fair war? But that has danger.
From hostile conflict, as from brothers' play,
He blushed not to invite me to his banquet.
I went not; and in that was I to blame?
Think you, there nothing had been found but peace,
From whence, soon after, sallied armed men?
Think you I nothing had to fear from swords,
When from their foils I scarce escaped with life?
Or poison might his valour suit as well:—
This passed, as suits his wisdom, Macedonians,
Who vaults o'er elder brothers to a throne.
With an armed rout he came to visit me.
Did I refuse to go, a bidden guest?
And should I welcome him, a threatening foe?
Resenting my refusal, boiling for revenge?
Dem. 'Tis false.
Ant. Forbear——The king!
Per. Had I received them,
You now had mourned my death, nor heard my cause.
Dares he deny he brought an armed throng?
Call those I name; who dare this deed, dare all;
Yet will not dare deny, that this is true.
My death alone can yield a stronger proof;
Will no less proof than that content a father?
Peri. Perseus, you see, has art, as well as fire;
Nor have the wars worn Athens from his tongue.
Per. Let him, who seeks to bathe in brother's blood,
Not find well pleased the fountain whence it flowed!
Let him, who shudders at a brother's knife,
Find refuge in the bosom of a father:
For where else can I fly? Whom else implore?
I have no Romans, with their eagle's wings,
To shelter me; Demetrius borrows those,
To mount full rebel-high: I have their hatred;
And, thanks to Heaven! deserve it: good Demetrius
Can see your towns and kingdoms torn away
By these protectors, and ne'er lose his temper.
My weakness I confess; it makes me rave;
It makes me weep—and my tears rarely flow.
Peri. Was ever stronger proof of filial love?
Per. Vain are Rome's hopes, while you and I survive:
But should the sword take me, and age my father,
(Heaven grant they leave him to the stroke of age!)
The kingdom, and the king, are both their own;
A duteous loyal king, a sceptred slave,
A willing Macedonian slave to Rome.

King. First let an earthquake swallow Macedonia!
Per. How, at such news, would Hannibal rejoice!
How the great shade of Alexander smile!
The thought quite chokes me up; I can no more.
King. Proceed.
Per. No, sir,——Why have I spoke at all?
'Twas needless: Philip justifies my charge;
Philip's the single witness, which I call,
To prove Demetrius guilty.
King. What dost mean?
Per. What mean I, sir! what mean I!—To run mad:
For who, unshaken both in heart and brain,
Can recollect it?
King. What?
Per. This morning's insult.
This morning they proclaimed him Philip's king.
This morning they forgave you for his sake.
O, pardon, pardon! I could strike him dead.
King. More temper.
Per. Not more truth; that cannot be!
And that it cannot, one proof can't escape you;
For what but truth could make me, sir, so bold?
Rome puts forth all her strength to crown her minion.
Demetrius' vices, thriving of themselves,
Her fulsome flatteries dung to ranker growth.
Demetrius is the burden of her song;
Each river, hill, and dale, has learnt his name;
While elder Perseus in a whisper dies.
Demetrius treats; Demetrius gives us peace;
Demetrius is our god, and would be so.
My sight is short: look on him you that can:
What sage experience sits upon his brow,
What awful marks of wisdom, who vouchsafes
To patronize a father, and a king?
Such patronage is treason.
King. Treason! Death.
Per. Nor let the ties of blood bind up the hands
Of justice; Nature's ties are broke already:
For, who contend before you?——Your two sons?—
No; read aright, 'tis Macedon and Rome.
A well-masked foreigner, and your——only son,
Guard of your life, and—exile of your love.
Now, bear me to my dungeon: what so fit
As darkness, chains, and death, for such a traitor?
King. Speak, Demetrius.
Ant. My lord, he cannot speak; accept his tears—
Instead of words.
Per. His tears are false as they———
Now, with fine phrase, and foppery of tongue,
More graceful action, and a smoother tone,
That orator of fable, and fair face,
Will steal on your bribed hearts, and, as you listen,
Plain truth, and I, plain Perseus, are forgot.

Dem. My father! king! and judge! thrice awful power!
Your son, your subject, and your prisoner, hear;
Thrice humble state! If I have grace of speech,
(Which gives, it seems, offence) be that no crime,
Which oft has served my country, and my king:
Nor in my brother let it pass for virtue,
That, as he is, ungracious he would seem:
For, oh! he wants not art, though grace may fail him.
The wonted aids of those that are accused,
Has my accuser seized. He shed false tears,
That my true sorrows might suspected flow:
He seeks my life, and calls me murderer;
And vows no refuge can he find on earth,
That I may want it in a father's arms;
Those arms, to which even strangers fly for safety,
King. Speak to your charge.
Dem. He charges me with treason.
If I'm a traitor, if I league with Rome,
Why did his zeal forbear me till this hour?
Was treason then no crime, till (as he feigns)
I sought his life? Dares Perseus hold so much
His father's welfare cheaper than his own?
Less cause have I, a brother, to complain.
He says, I wade for empire through his blood:
He says, I place my confidence in Rome:
Why murder him, if Rome will crown my brow?
Will then a sceptre, dipped in brother's blood,
Conciliate love, and make my reign secure?
False are both charges; and he proves them false,
By placing them together.
Ant. That's well urged.
Dem. Mark, sir, how Perseus, unawares, absolves me
From guilt in all, by loading all with guilt.
Did I design him poison at my feast?
Why then did I provoke him in the field,
That, as he did, he might refuse to come?
When angry he refused, I should have soothed
His roused resentment, and deferred the blow;
Not destined him that moment to my sword,
Which I before instructed him to shun.
Through fear of death, did he decline my banquet?
Could I expect admittance then at his?
These numerous pleas, at variance, overthrow
Each other, and are advocates for me.
Per. No, sir, Posthumius is his advocate,
King. Art thou afraid, that I should hear him out?
Dem. Quit then, this picture, this well-painted fear,
And come to that, which touches him indeed.
Why is Demetrius not despised of all,
His second in endowments, as in birth?
How dare I draw the thoughts of Macedon?
How dare I gain esteem with foreign powers?
Esteem, when gained, how dare I to preserve?
These are his secret thoughts; these burn within;
These sting up accusations in his soul;
Turn friendly visits to foul fraud, and murder;
And pour in poison to the bowl of love.
Merit is treason in a younger brother.
King. But clear your conduct with regard to Rome.
Dem. Alas! dread sir, I grieve to find set down
Among my crimes, what ought to be my praise.
That I went hostage, or ambassador,
Was Philip's high command, not my request:
Indeed, when there, in both those characters,
I bore in mind to whom I owed my birth:
Rome's favour followed. If it is a crime
To be regarded, spare a crime you caused;
Caused by your orders, and example too.
True, I'm Rome's friend, while Rome is your ally:
When not, this hostage, this ambassador,
So dear, stands forth the fiercest of her foes;
At your command, flies swift on wings of fire,
The native thunder of a father's arm.
Ant. There spoke at once the hero and the son.
Dem. To close—To thee, I grant, some thanks are due; [*Speaking to Perseus.*
Not for thy kindness, but malignity:
Thy character's my friend, though thou my foe:
For, say, whose temper promises most guilt?
Perseus, importunate, demands my death:
I do not ask for his: Ah! No! I feel
Too powerful nature pleading for him here:
But, were there no fraternal tie to bind me,
A son of Philip must be dear to me.
If you, my father, had been angry with me,
An elder brother, a less awful parent,
He should assuage you, he should intercede,
Soften my failings, and indulge my youth;
But my asylum drops its character;
I find not there my rescue, but my ruin.
Per. His bold assurance——
King. Do not interrupt him;
But let thy brother finish his defence.
Dem. O Perseus! how I tremble as I speak!
Where is a brother's voice, a brother's eye?
Where is the melting of a brother's heart?
Where is our awful father's dread command?
Where a dear dying mother's last request?
Forgot, scorned, hated, trodden under foot!
Thy heart, how dead to every call of nature!
Unson'd! unbrothered! nay, unhumanized!
Far from affection, as thou art near in blood!
Oh! Perseus! Perseus!—But my heart's too full. [*Falls on Antigonus.*
King. Support him!
Per. Vengeance overtake his crimes!
King. No more!
Ant. See from his hoary brow he wipes the dew,
Which agony wrings from him.
King. Oh, my friend,
These boys at strife, like Ætna's struggling flames,

Convulsions cause, and make a mountain shake;
Shake Philip's firmness, and convulse his heart,
And, with a fiery flood of civil war,
Threaten to deluge my divided land.
I've heard them both; by neither am convinced;
And yet Demetrius' words went through my heart.—
A double crime, Demetrius, is your charge;
Fondness for Rome, and hatred to your brother.
If you can clear your innocence in one,
'Twill give us cause to think you wronged in both.

Dem. How shall I clear it, sir?

King. This honest man
Detests the Romans: if you wed his daughter,
Rome's foe becomes the guardian of your faith.

Dem. I told you, sir, when I returned from Rome—

King. How! Dost thou want an absolute command?
Your brother, father, country, all exact it.

Ant. See yonder guards at hand, if you refuse.
Nay, more; a father, so distressed, demands
A son's compassion, to becalm his heart.
Oh! sir, comply. [*Aside to Demetrius.*

Dem. There! there indeed you touch me!
Besides, if I'm confined, and Perseus free,
I never, never shall behold her more.——
Pardon, ye gods! an artifice forced on me.
[*Aside to Antigonus.*
Dread sir, your son complies. [*To the king.*

Dym. Astonishment!

King. Strike off his chains. Nay, Perseus too is free:
They wear no bonds, but those of duty, now.
Dymas, go thank the prince: he weds your daughter;
And highest honours pay your high desert.
[*Exeunt all but Dym. and Dem.*

Dym. O, sir, without presumption, may I dare
To lift my ravished thought?——

Dem. In what I've done,
I paid a duty to my father's will:
And set you an example, where 'tis due,
Of not with-holding yours.

Dym. My duty, sir,
To you, can never fail.

Dem. Then, Dymas, I request thee,
Go seek the king, and save me from a marriage
My brother has contrived, in artful malice,
To make me lose my father, or my love.
Go, charge the just refusal on thyself.

Dym. What Philip authorizes me to wish,
You, sir, may disappoint. But, to take on me
The load of the refusal——

Dem. Is no more
Than Dymas owes his honour, if he'd shun
The natural surmise, that he concurred
In brewing this foul treason.

Dym. Sir, the king
Knows what he does: and, if he seeks my glory—

Dem. In a degree, destructive of his own,
'Tis yours to disappoint him, or renounce
Your duty to your king.

Dym. You'll better tell——

Dem. Yes, better tell the king he wounds his honour,
By lifting up a minion from the dust,
And mating him with princes! Use your power
Against yourself. Yes, use it like a man,
In serving him, who gave it. Thus you'll make
Indulgence, justice; and absolve your master.
Though kings delight in raising what they love,
Less owe they to themselves than to the throne;
Nor must they prostitute its majesty,
To swell a subject's pride, howe'er deserving.

Dym. What the king grants me——

Dem. Talk not of a grant;
What a king ought not, that he cannot give;
And what is more than meet from prince's bounty,
Is plunder, not a grant. Think you, his honour
A perquisite belonging to your place,
As favourite paramount? Preserve the king
From doing wrong, though wrong is done for you,
And shew, 'tis not in favour to corrupt thee.

Dym. I sought not, sir, this honour.

Dem. But would take it.
True majesty's the very soul of kings;
And rectitude's the soul of majesty:
If mining minions sap that rectitude,
The king may live, but majesty expires:
And he, that lessens majesty, impairs
That just obedience public good requires;
Doubly a traitor, to the crown and state.

Dym. Must I refuse what Philip's pleased to give?

Dem. Can a king give thee more than is his own?
Know, a king's dignity is public wealth;
On that subsists the nation's fame and power.
Shall fawning sycophants, to plump themselves,
Eat up their master, and dethrone his glory?
What are such wretches? What, but vapours foul,
From fens and bogs, from royal beams exhaled,
That radiance intercepting, which should cheer
The land at large? Hence subjects' hearts grow cold,
And frozen loyalty forgets to flow:
But, then 'tis slippery standing for the minion:
Stains on his ermine, to their royal master
Such miscreants are; not jewels in his crown.
If you persist, sir—But, of words no more!
To me, to threat, is harder than to do.

Dym. Let me embrace this genuine son of empire!
When warm debates divide the doubtful land,
Should I not know the prince most fit to reign?
I've tried you as an eagle tries her young,
And find, your dauntless eye is fixed on glory.
I'll to the king, and your commands obey.——
We must give young men opiates in a fever.
[*Aside.*

Yes, boy, I will obey thee, to thy ruin!
Erixene shall strike thee dead for this!
[*Exit Dymas.*
Dem. These statesmen nothing woo but gold and power;
I'm a bold advocate for other love,
Though, at their bar, indicted for a fool.
When reason, like the skilful charioteer,
Can break the fiery passions to the bit,
And, spite of their licentious sallies, keep
The radiant track of glory—passions, then,
Are aids and ornaments. Triumphant reason,
Firm in her seat, and swift in her career,
Enjoys their violence, and, smiling, thanks
Their formidable flame, for high renown.
Take, then, my soul, fair maid! 'tis wholly thine;
And thence I feel an energy divine.
When objects worthy praise our hearts approve,
Each virtue grows on consecrated love:
And, sure, soft passion claims to be forgiven,
When love of beauty is the love of Heaven.
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter ERIXENE *and* DELIA.

Erix. 'Tis plain! 'tis plain! this marriage gains her father:
He, joined to Rome, the crown. Thy words were true;
He woos the diadem; that diadem, which I
Despised for him. Oh, how unlike our loves!
But it is well; he gives me my revenge.
Wed Dymas' daughter! What a fall is there!
Not the world's empire could repair his glory.
Del. Madam, you can't be moved too much! But why
More now than at the first?
Erix. At first I doubted:
For who, that loved like me, could have believed?
I disbelieved what Pericles reported;
And thought it Perseus' art to wound our loves.
But when the good Antigonus, sworn friend
To false Demetrius, when his word confirmed it,
Then passion took me, as the northern blast
An autumn leaf. O Gods! the dreadful whirl!
But, while I speak, he's with her: laughs and plays;
Mingles his dalliance with insulting mirth;
To this new goddess offers up my tears;
Yes, with my shame and torture, woos her love.
I see, hear, feel it! O these raging fires!
Can then the thing we scorn give so much pain?
Del. Madam, these transports give him cause to triumph!
Erix. I vent my grief to thee; he ne'er shall know it;
If I can't conquer, I'll conceal my passion,
And stifle all its pangs beneath disdain.
Del. The greatest minds are most relenting too;
If then Demetrius should repent his crime——
Erix. If still my passion burns, it shall burn inward:
On the fierce rack in silence I'll expire,
Before one sigh escape me.—He repent!
What wild extravagance of thought is thine!
But did he? Who repents, has once been false:
In love, repentance but declares our guilt;
And injured honour shall exact its due.
In vain his love, nay mine, should groan in vain:
Both are devoted. Vengeance, vengeance reigns!
Our first love, murdered, is the sharpest pang
A human heart can feel.
Del. The king approaches.

Enter the KING, *&c.*

King. Madam, at length we see the down of peace,
And hope an end of our domestic jars.
The jealous Perseus can no longer fear
Demetrius is a Roman, since this day
Makes him the son of Dymas, Rome's worst foe.
Erix. Already, sir, I've heard, and heard with joy,
The important news.
King. To make our bliss run o'er,
You, Madam, will complete what Heaven begins,
And save the love-sick Perseus from despair.
That marriage would leave Rome without pretence
To touch our conquest; and for ever join
To these dominions long disputed Thrace.

Enter DYMAS.

Erix. Though Thrace by conquest stoops to Macedon,
I know my rank, and would preserve its due.
With meditated coldness have I heard
Prince Perseus' vows; unwilling to consent
Before restored to my forefathers' throne,
Lest that consent should merit little thanks,
As flowing less from choice than your command:
But since the Roman pride will find account
In my persisting still, and Philip suffer,
I quit the lofty thought on which I stood,
And yield to your request.
King. Indulgent Gods!
Blest moment! How will this with transport fill
The doubtful Perseus, after years of pain!
Dym. My lord, I've heard what passed, and give you joy
Of Perseus' nuptials, which your state requires:
But for Demetrius'— think of those no more.
Far from accepting such a load of glory,

I bring, I bring, my lord, this forfeit head,
Due to my bold refusal.
King. Dares the boy
Fall from his promise, and impose on thee
Forced disobedience to my royal pleasure?
Dym. No, my most honoured lord, there, there's my crime:
Fond of the maid, with ardour he pressed on;
But should I dare pollute his blood with mine?
But you, sir, authorize it—still more base,
To wrong a master so profusely kind.
King. That man is noble, on whom Philip smiles;
Come, come, there's something more in this—explain.
Dym. Why am I forced on this ungrateful office?
Yet can't I tell you more than fame has told,
Which says, Demetrius is in league with Rome.
Why weds ambition then an humble maid,
But to gain me to treason? What then follows?
They'll say, the subtle statesman planned this marriage,
To raise his blood into his master's throne.
No, sir, preserve my fame, let life suffice.

Enter PERICLES.

Peri. Sir, your ambassadors arrived from Rome— [*Presents a letter.*
King. Ha! I must read it; this will tell me more. [*After reading it.*
Oh, princess! Now our only comfort flows
From your indulgence to my better son.
This dreadful news precipitates my wish.
To keep rapacious Rome from seizing Thrace,
You cannot wed too soon: my fair ally!
What if you bless me and my son to-morrow?
Erix. Since you request, and your affairs demand it,
Without a blush, I think I may comply.
King. Oh, daughter!—but no more; the gods will thank you.
I go to bless my Perseus with the news.
Dym. Thus the boy's dead in empire and in love. [*Exeunt King, Dymas, &c.*
Erix. I triumph! I'm revenged! I reign! I reign!
Nor thank Demetrius' treason for a crown.
Love is our own cause, honour is the gods',
I can be glorious without happiness;
But without glory never can be blest.
Del. 'Tis well: but can you wed the man, you scorn?
Erix. Wed any thing, for vengeance on the perjured.
I'll now insult him from an higher sphere:
This unexpected turn may gall his pride.
Whate'er has pangs for him, has charms for me.
Del. A rooted love is scarce so soon removed.
Erix. If not, the greater virtue to controul it;
And strike at his heart, though 'tis through my own.
Del. I cannot but praise this triumph, but I dread
The combat still. And see, the foe draws near.

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. Erixene!
Erix. My lord?
Dem. My pale cheek speaks;
My trembling limbs prevent my faultering tongue,
And ask you——
Erix. What, my lord?
Dem. My lord? Her eyes
Confirm it true, and yet, without a crime,
I can't believe it. Oh, Erixene——
Erix. I guess your meaning, sir; but am surprised
That Dymas' son should think of aught I do.
Dem. False are my senses! False both ear and eye!
All, all be rather false than her I love!
Erix. She passed not, sir, this way.
Dem. Is then my pain
Your sport? And can Erixene pretend
Herself deceived by what deceived the king?
An artifice made use of for your sake;
A proof, not violation, of my love?
Erix. I thought not of your love, nor artifice;
Both were forgot; or rather, never known.
But, without artifice, I tell you this;
Your brother lays his sceptre at my feet—
And whose example bids my heart resist
The charms of empire?
Dem. This is woman's skill;
You cease to love, and from my conduct strive
To labour an excuse. For if, indeed,
You thought me false, had you been thus serene,
Calm and unruffled! No; my heart says, no.
Passions, if great, though turned to their reverse,
Keep their degree, and are great passions still.
And she, who, when she thinks her lover false,
Retains her temper, never lost her heart.
Erix. That I'm serene, says not I never loved:
Indeed, the vulgar float as passion drives;
But noble minds have reason for their queen.
While you deserved, my passion was sincere:
You change, my passion dies. But, pardon, sir,
If my vain mind thinks anger is too much;
Take my neglect, I can afford no more.
Dem. No? rage! flame! thunder! give a thousand deaths!
Oh, rescue me from this more dreadful calm!
This cursed indifference! which, like a frost
In northern seas, outdoes the fiercest storm.
Commanded by my father to comply,
I feigned obedience: had I then refused——
Erix. I grant the consequence had been most dreadful!
I grant, that Dymas' daughter had been angry.
Dem. Ask Dymas with what rage——
Erix. You well might rage,
To be refused.
Dem. Refused!

Erix. He told your secret;
The king, and I, and all the court can witness.
Dem. Refused! False villain! Oh, the perjured slave!
Hell-born impostor! Madam, 'tis most false!
Warm from my heart is every word I speak!
The villain lies! Believe the pangs, that rend me;
Believe the witness streaming from my eyes,
And let me speak no more.
Erix. I do believe
Your grief sincere. I've heard the maid is fair.
Dem. Proceed; and thus, indeed, commit that crime,
You falsely charge on me. The crown has charmed you.
How warm this morning did you press my flight!
The cause is plain: an outraged lover's groan,
And dying agony, molest your ear,
And hurt the music of a nuptial song.
Erix. Since your inconstancy persists to charge
Its crime on my ambition, I'll be kind;
And leave you in possession of an error,
Of which you seem so fond.
Dem. Ah! stay one moment!

Enter PERSEUS *and* PERICLES.

Per. Erixene!
Dem. Distraction! [*Starting.*
Erix. 'Tis well timed.
My lord, your brother doubts, if I am sincere,
And thinks (an error natural to him)
I will break my vow to you. You will clear my fame,
And labour to convince him, that to-morrow
Erixene's at once a bride and queen. [*Exit.*
Per. When I have worked him up to violence,
Bring thou the king, and pity my distress.
[*To Pericles, who goes out.*
Dem. On what extremes extreme distress compels me!
In things impossible I put my trust:
I, in my only brother, find a foe;
Yet, in my rival, hope the greatest friend.
When all our hopes are lodged in such expedients,
'Tis as if poison were our only food,
And death was called on as the guard of life.
Per. Why dost thou droop?
Dem. Because I am dead; quite dead
To hope; and yet rebellious to despair;
Like ghosts unblessed, that burst the bars of death.
Strange is my conduct! Stranger my distress:
Beyond example both! Whoe'er before me
Pressed his worst foe to prove his truest friend?
But though thou art not my brother, thou art a man;
And, if a man, compassionate the worst
That man can feel; though found that worst in me.
Per. What would'st?
Dem. Unclinch thy talons from thy prey;
Let the dove fly to this her nest again.
[*Striking his breast.*
For, Oh! the maid's unalienably mine,
Though now through rage run mad, and turned to thee.
How often have I languished at her feet,
Basked in her eye, and revelled in her smile!
How often, as she listened to my vows,
Trembling and pale with agonies of joy,
Have I left earth, and mounted to the stars!
Per. There Dymas' daughter shone above the rest,
Illustrious in thy sight.
Dem. Thy taunt, how false!
I no less press your interest, than my own.
Think you 'tis possible her heart, so long
Inclined to me, the price of all my vows,
Purchased by tears and groans, and paid me down
In tenderest returns of love divine,
Can in one day be yours? Impossible!
Per. If I am deceived, I am pleased with the deceit.
How my heart dances in the golden dream!
In pity do not wake me, till to-morrow.
Dem. Then thou wilt wake distracted. Trust me, brother,
She gives her hand alone.
Per. Nor need I more;
That hand's enough, that brings a sceptre in it.
I scorn a prince, who weds with meaner views.
Her duty's mine, and I conceive small pain
From your sweet error, that her love is your's.
I am pleased such cordial thoughts of your own merit
Support you in distress.
Dem. Inhuman Perseus!
If pity dwells within the heart of man,
If due that pity to the last distress,
Pity a lover exquisitely pained,
A lover exquisitely pained by you.
Oh! in the name of all the gods, relent!
Give me my princess, give her to my throes!
Amidst a thousand you may chuse a love;
The spacious earth contains but one for me.
But Oh! I rave. Art thou not he, the man,
Who drinks my groans like music to his ear?
And would, as wine, as nectar, drink my blood?
Are all my hopes of mercy lodged in thee?
Oh, rigid gods! and shall I then fall down,
Embrace thy feet, and bathe them with my tears?
Yes, I will drown thee with my tears, my blood,
So thou afford a human ear to pangs,
A brother's pangs, a brother's broken heart!
Per. Pardon, Demetrius; but the princess calls,
And I am bound to go.
Dem. Oh, stay! [*Laying hold of him.*
Per. You tremble.
Dem. The princess calls, and you are bound to go!

Per. E'en so.
Dem. What princess?
Per. Mine.
Dem. 'Tis false!
Per. Unhand me.
Dem. What, see, talk, touch, nay, taste her like a bee,
Draw honey from her wounded lip, while I
Am stung to death!
Per. The triumph once was your's.
Dem. Rip up my breast, or you shall never stir.
My heart may visit her! Oh, take it with you!
Have I not seen her, where she has not been?
Have I not clasped her shadow? Trod her steps?
Transported trod! as if they led to Heaven?
Each morn my life I lighted at her eye,
And every evening, at its close, expired.
[*Bursts into tears.*
Per. Fie! thou art a Roman; can a Roman weep?
Sure Alexander's helmet can sustain
Far heavier strokes than these. For shame, Demetrius;
E'en snatch up the next Sabine in thy way,
'Twill do as well. [*Going.*
Dem. By Heaven you shall not stir.
Long as I live, I stand a world between you,
And keep you distant as the poles asunder.
Who takes my love, in mercy take my life;
Thy bloody pass cleave through thy brother's breast.
I beg, I challenge, I provoke my death.
[*His hand upon his sword.*

Enter KING *and* DYMAS.

Per. You will not murder me?
Dem. Yes, you and all.
King. How like a tyger foaming o'er his prey!
Per. Now, sir, believe your eyes, believe your ears,
And still believe me perjured as this morning.
King. Heaven's wrath's exhausted, there's no more to fear.
My darling son found criminal in all!
Dem. That villain there to blast me! Yes, I'll speak;
For what have I to fear, who feel the worst?
'Tis time the truth were known. That villain, sir,
Has cleft my heart, and laughs to see it bleed:
But his confession shall redeem my fame,
And re-enthrone me in my princess' smile;
Or I'll return that false embrace he gave me,
And stab him in your sight.
King. Hold, insolent!
Where's your respect to me?
Dem. Oh, royal sir!
That has undone me. Through respect I gave
A feigned consent, which his black artifice
Has turned to my destruction. I refused
That slave's, that cursed slave's, that statesman's daughter,
And he pretends she was refused to me.
Hence, hence this desolation. Nought I fear,
Though nature groan her last. And shall he then
Escape and triumph?
King. Guards there! Seize the prince!
[*He is seized.*
The man you menace you shall learn to fear.
Dym. Hold, sir! not this for me! It is your son:
What is my life, though poured upon your feet?
King. Is this a son?
Dem. No, sir; my crime's too great,
Which dares to vindicate a father's honour,
To catch the glories of a falling crown,
And save it from pollution. But I've done:
I die, unless my princess is restored;
[*Pointing to Dymas.*
And if I die, by heaven, and earth, and hell!
His sordid blood shall mingle with the dust,
And see if thence 'twill mount into the throne.
Oh, sir! think of it! I'll expect my fate. [*Exit.*
King. And thou shalt have it.
Dym. How, my lord; in tears!
King. As if the gods came down in evidence,
How many sudden rays of proof concur
To my conviction? Was ever equal boldness?
But 'tis no wonder from a brother king;
[*Produces the forged letter.*
This king of Thrace—To-morrow he'll be king
Of Macedon——He therefore dies to-night.
Per. And yet I doubt it, for I know his fondness.
Thou practise well the lesson I have taught thee,
While I put on a solemn face of woe,
Afflicted for a brother's early fall!
[*Aside to Dymas.*
Heaven knows with what regard—But, sir, your safety—
[*Presenting the mandate for Demetrius's death.*
King. What giv'st thou here?
Dym. Your passport to renown.
You sign your apotheosis in that.
What scales the skies, but zeal for public good?
Per. How god-like mercy!
Dym. Mercy to mankind,
By treason awed.
King. Must then thy brother bleed?
[*To Perseus.*
[*Dymas seeming at a loss, Perseus whispers him, and gives a letter.*
Dym. No, sir, the king of Thrace,
[*Looking on the letter.*
King. Why that is true——
Yet, who, if not a father, should forgive?
Dym. Who, sir, if not a Philip, should be just?
King. Is't not my son? [*To Dymas.*
Dym. If not, far less his guilt.
King. Is't not my other Perseus! [*To Perseus.*
Per. Sir, I thank you;

That seeks your crown and life.
King. And life?
Dym. No, sir;
He'll only take your crown; you still may live.
King. Heaven blast thee for that thought!
Per. Why shakes my father?
King. It stabs, it gnaws, it harrows up my soul.
Is he not young? Was he not much indulged?
Galled by his brother? Doubted by his father?
Tempted by Rome? A nation to a boy?
Dym. Oh, a mere infant—that deposes kings.
King. No; once he saved my crown.
Dym. And now would wear it.
King. How my head swims!
Per. Nor strange; the task is hard.
Dym. Yet scarce for him. Brutus was but a Roman:
[*Speaking, as if he would not have the king hear.*
Yet, like a Philip dared, and is immortal.
King. I hear thee, Dymas; give me then the mandate. [*Going to sign, he stops short.*
Dym. No wonder if his mother thus had paused.
Per. Rank cankers on thy tongue! Why mention her? [*Aside.*
King. Oh, gods! I see her now: what am I doing! [*Throws away the style.*
I see her dying eye let fall a tear
In favour of Demetrius. Shall I stab
Her lovely image, stampt on every feature?
Dym. His soul escaped it, sir.
King. Thou liest; begone.
[*Perseus and Dymas in great confusion—Perseus whispers Dymas.*
Dym. True; that, or nought, will touch him.
[*Aside to Perseus.*
If, sir, your mercy——— [*To the king.*
Per. O speak on of mercy!
Mercy, the darling attribute of Heaven!
Dym. If you should spare him——
King. What if I should spare him?
Dym. I dare not say——Your wrath again might rise.
King. Yes, if thou'rt silent—What if I should spare him?
Dym. Why, if you would, proud Rome would thank you for it.
King. Rome! Her applause more shocks me than his death.
O, thou, Death's orator! Dread advocate
For bowelless severity! assist
My trembling hand, as thou hast steeled my heart;
And, if it is guilt in me, share the guilt.
He's dead. [*Signs.*] And if I blot it with one tear,
Perseus, though less affected, will forgive me.
Per. Forgive! Sir, I applaud, and wish my sorrow
Were mild enough to weep.

[*The King, going out, meets Demetrius in mourning, introduced by Antigonus. He starts back, and drops on Dymas. Recovering, speaks.*]
King. This, Fate, is thy tenth wave, and quite o'erwhelms me:
It less had shocked me, had I met his ghost.
This is a plot to sentence me to death.
What hast thou done, my mortal foe! thrown bars [*To Antigonus.*
Athwart my glory? But thy scheme shall fail.
As rushing torrents sweep the obstructed mound,
So Philip meets this mountain in his way,
Yet keeps his purpose still.
[*Perseus and Pericles whisper aside.*
Peri. I can't but fear it.
Per. I grant the danger great, yet don't despair.
Jove is against thee, Perseus on thy side.
Ant. The prince, dread sir, low on his bended knee——
King. This way, Antigonus. Dost mark his bloom?
Grace in his aspect, grandeur in his mien?
Ant. I do.
King. 'Tis false; take a king's word. He's dead.
That darling of my soul would stab me sleeping.
How dar'st thou start? Art thou the traitor's father?
If thou art pale, what is enough for me?
How his grave yawns! Oh, that it were my own!
Ant. Mourn not the guilty.
King. No, he's innocent:
Death pays his debt to justice, and that done,
I grant him still my son; as such I love him:
Yes, and will clasp him to my breast, while yet
His clay is warm, nor moulders at my touch.
Per. A curse on that embrace! [*Aside.*
Dym. Nay, worse; he weeps.
King. Poor boy, be not deceived by my compassion;
My tears are cruel, and I groan thy death.
Dem. And am I then to die? If death's decreed,
Stab me yourself, nor give me to the knife
Of midnight ruffians, that have forged my crimes.
For you I beg, for you I pour my tears;
You are deceived, dishonoured; I am only slain.
Oh, father!——
King. Father! there's no father here.
Forbear to wound me with that tender name,
Nor raise all nature up in arms against me!
Dem. My father! guardian! friend! nay, deity!
What less than gods give being, life, and death!
My dying mother——
King. Hold thy peace, I charge thee.
Dem. Pressing your hand, and bathing it with tears,
Bequeathed your tenderness for her to me;
And low on earth my legacy I claim,

Clasping your knees, though banished from your breast.
King. My knees! Would that were all! he grasps my heart!
Perseus, canst thou stand by, and see me ruined?
[*Reaching his hand to Perseus.*
Per. Loose, loose thy hold. It is my father too.
King. Yes, Macedon, and thine, and I'll preserve thee.
Dem. Who once before preserved it from the Thracian?
And who, at Thrasymene, turned the lifted bolt
From Philip's hoary brow?
King. I'll hear no more.
O Perseus! Dymas! Pericles! assist me,
Unbind me, disenchant me, break this charm
Of nature, that accomplice with my foes;
Rend me, O rend me, from the friend of Rome!
Per. Nay, then, howe'er reluctant, aid I must.
The friend of Rome! That severs you for ever,
Though most incorporate and strongly knit,
As lightning rends the knotted oak asunder.
Dem. In spite of lightning I renew the tie;
And stubborn is the grasp of dying men.
Who's he that shall divide me from myself?
[*Demetrius is forced from the king's knees, on which, starting up, he flings his arms round his father.*]
Still of a piece with him, from whom I grew,
I'll bleed on my asylum, dart my soul
In this embrace, and thus my treason crown.
King. Who love yourselves, or Macedon, or me,
From the cursed eagle's talons wrench my crown,
And this barbed arrow from my breast.—'Tis done; [*Forced asunder.*
And the blood gushes after it. I faint!
Dym. Support the king!
Per. While treason licks the dust.
[*Pointing at Demetrius, fallen in the struggle.*
Dym. A field well fought.
Per. And justice has prevailed.
King. O, that the traitor could conceal the son!
Farewell, once best beloved! still more deplored!
He, he, who dooms thee, bleeds upon thy tomb.
[*Exit.*
Dem. Prostrate on thee, my mother earth, be thou
Kinder than brother, or than father; open
And save me, in thy bosom, from my—friends.
Friends, sworn to wash their hands in guiltless tears,
And quench infernal thirst in kindred blood;
As if relation severed human hearts,
Or that destruction were the child of love!
Per. Farewell, young traitor: if they ask below,
Who sent thee beardless down, say, honest Perseus;
Whom reason sways, not instinct; who can strike
At horrid parricide, and flagrant treason,
Though through a bosom dearer than his own.
Think'st thou my tender heart can hate a brother?
The Gods and Perseus war with nought but guilt.
But I must go. What, sir, your last commands
To your Erixene? She chides my stay. [*Exit.*
Dem. Without that token of a brother's love
He could not part; my death was not enough.
I came for mercy, and I find it here.
And death is mercy, since my love is lost.
Alas! my father too! my heart aches for him.
And Perseus—fain would I forgive even thee:
But Philip's sufferings cry too loud against it.
Blind author, and sure mourner of my death!
Father most dear!—What pangs hast thou to come?
Like that poor wretch is thy unhappy doom,
Who, while in sleep his fevered fancy glows,
Draws his keen sword, and sheaths it in his foes:
But, waking, starts upright, in wild surprise,
To feel warm blood glide round him as he lies;
To see his reeking hands in crimson dyed,
And a pale corse extended by his side:
He views with horror what mad dreams have done,
And sinks, heart-broken, on a murdered son.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

KING, POSTHUMIUS, *&c. meeting.*

Post. We, in behalf of our allies, O King!
Called on thee yesterday, to clear thy glory.
No wonder now, that Philip is unjust
To strangers, who has murdered his own son.
King. 'Tis false.
Post. No thanks to Philip, that he fled.
King. A traitor is no son.
Post. Heaven's vengeance on me,
If he refused not yesterday thy crown,
Though life and love both bribed him to comply.
King. See there! [*Gives the letter.*
Post. 'Tis not the consul's hand or seal.
King. You're his accomplices.
Post. We're his avengers.
'Tis war.
King. Eternal war.
Post. Next time we meet——
King. Is in the capitol. Haste, fly my kingdoms!
Post. No longer thine.
King. Yes, and proud Rome a province.
[*Exeunt Posthumius, &c.*

They brave, they make, they tyrannize o'er kings.
The name of king the prostrate world adored,
Ere Romulus had called his thieves together.
But let me pause—Not Quintius' hand or seal?
Doubt and impatience, like thick smoke and fire,
Cloud and torment my reason.

Ant. Sir, recall,
And re-examine those you sent to Rome:
You took their evidence in haste and anger.
Torture, if they refuse, will tell the truth.

King. Go, stop the nuptials, till you hear from me.

[*Exeunt King and Antigonus.*

SCENE II.

Enter ERIXENE *and* DELIA, *meeting.*

Del. Madam, the prince, who fled from threatened death,
Attempting his escape to foreign realms,
Was lately taken at the city gates,
So strongly guarded by his father's powers;
And now, confined, expects his final doom.

Erix. Imprisoned, and to die!—And let him die.
Bid Dymas' daughter weep. I half forgot
His perjured insolence; I'll go and glut
My vengeance. Oh, how just a traitor's death!
And blacker still, a traitor to my love,

[*Exeunt Erixene and Delia.*

Scene draws, and shews DEMETRIUS *in prison.*

Dem. Thou subterranean sepulchre of peace!
Thou home of horror! hideous nest of crimes!
Guilt's first sad stage in her dark road to hell!
Ye thick-barred sunless passages for air,
To keep alive the wretch, that longs to die!
Ye low-browed arches, through whose sullen gloom
Resound the ceaseless groans of pale despair!
Ye dreadful shambles, caked with human blood!
Receive a guest from far, far other scenes,
From pompous courts, from shouting victories,
Carousing festivals, harmonious bowers,
And the soft chains of heart-dissolving love.
Oh, how unlike to these! Heart-breaking load
Of shame eternal, ne'er to be knocked off!
Oh welcome death!—no, never but by thee!—
Nor has a foe done this. A friend! a father!—
Oh, that I could have died without their guilt!—

Enter ERIXENE, DEMETRIUS *gazing at her.*

So looked in chaos the first beam of light:
How drives the strong enchantment of her eye
All horror hence!—How die the thoughts of death!

Erix. I knew not my own heart. I cannot bear it.
Shame chides me back; for, to insult his woes
Is too severe; and to condole, too kind. [*Going.*

Dem. Thus, I arrest you in the name of mercy,
And dare compel your stay. Is then one look,
One word, one moment, a last moment too,
When I stand tottering on the brink of death,
A cruel ignominious death, too much
For one, that loves like me? A length of years
You may devote to my blest rival's arms;
I ask but one short moment. O permit,
Permit the dying to lay claim to thee!
To thee, thou dear equivalent for life,
Cruel, relentless, marble-hearted maid!

Erix. Demetrius, you persist to do me wrong;
For, know, though I behold thee as thou art,
Doubly a traitor, to the state and me,
Thy sorrow, thy distress, have touched my bosom:
I own it is a fault—I pity thee.

Enter OFFICER.

Offi. My lord, your time is short, and death waits for you.

Erix. Death!—I forgive thee from my inmost soul.

Dem. Forgive me? Oh! thou need'st not to forgive,
If imposition had not struck thee blind.
Truth lies in ambush yet, but will start up,
And seize thy trembling soul, when mine is fled.
O, I've a thousand, thousand things to say!

Erix. And I am come a secret to disclose,
That might awake thee, wert thou dead already!

Offi. My lord, your final moment is expired.

Dem. and Erix. One, one short moment more!

Dem. No; death lets fall
The curtain, and divides our love for ever!

[*Demetrius is forced out.*

Erix. Oh, I've a darker dungeon in my soul,
Nor want an executioner to kill me.
What revolutions in the human heart
Will pity cause! What horrid deeds revenge!

[*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Enter ANTIGONUS, *with attendants.*

Ant. How distant virtue dwells from mortal man!
Was't not that each man calls for others' virtue,
Her very name on earth would be forgot,
And leave the tongue, as it has left the heart!
Was ever such a laboured plan of guilt?
Take the king's mandate, to the prison fly,
Throw wide the gates, and let Demetrius know
The full detail!

Enter ERIXENE.

The princess! ha! be gone! [*To the attendants.*
While I stir up an equal transport here.
Princess, I see your griefs, and judge the cause;
But I bring news might raise you from your grave,
Or call you down from Heaven to hear with joy!
Just gods! the virtuous will at last prevail.
On motives, here too tedious to relate,
I begged the king to re-examine those,

Who came from Rome. The king approved my counsel.
Surprised, and conscious, in their charge they faultered,
And threatened tortures soon discovered all:
That Perseus bribed them to their perjuries;
That Quintius' letter was a forgery;
That prince Demetrius' intercourse with Rome
Was innocent of treason to the state.

Erix. Oh, my swoln heart! What will the gods do with me?

Ant. And to confirm this most surprising news,
Dymas, who, striving to suppress a tumult,
The rumour of Demetrius' flight had raised,
Was wounded sore, with his last breath confessed,
The prince refused his daughter; which affront
Inflamed the statesman to his prince's ruin.

Erix. Did he refuse her? [*Swoons.*

Ant. Quite o'ercome with joy!
Transported out of life!—The gods restore her!

Erix. Ah! why recall me? This is a new kind
Of murder; most severe! that dooms to life.

Ant. Fair princess, you confound me!

Erix. Am I fair?
Am I a princess? Love and empire mine?
Gay, gorgeous visions dancing in my sight!——
No, here I stand a naked, shipwrecked wretch,
Cold, trembling, pale, spent, helpless, hopeless, maid;
Cast on a shore as cruel as the waves,
O'erhung with rugged rocks, too steep to climb;
The mountain billows loud, come foaming in
Tremendous, and confound, ere they devour!

Ant. Madam, the king absolves you from your vow.

Erix. For me it matters not; but, oh! the prince——
When he had shot the gulph of his despair,
Emerging into all the light of Heaven;
His heart high-beating with well-grounded hope;
Then to make shipwreck of his happiness,
Like a poor wretch, that has escaped the storm,
And swam to what he deems an happy isle,
When, lo! the savage natives drink his blood!
Ah! why is vengeance sweet to woman's pride,
As rapture to her lover? It has undone me!

Del. Madam, he comes.

Erix. Leave us, Antigonus.

Ant. What dreadful secret this?—But I'll obey,
Invoke the gods, and leave the rest to fate.
[*Exit.*

Erix. How terribly triumphant comes the wretch!
He comes, like flowers ambrosial, early born,
To meet the blast, and perish in the storm!

Enter DEMETRIUS.

Dem. After an age of absence in one hour,
Have I then found thee, thou celestial maid!
Like a fair Venus in a stormy sea,
Or a bright goddess, through the shades of night,
Dropt from the stars to these blest arms again?
How exquisite is pleasure after pain!
Why throbs my heart so turbulently strong,
Pained at thy presence, through redundant joy,
Like a poor miser, beggared by his store?

Erix. Demetrius, joy and sorrow dwell too near.

Dem. Talk not of sorrow, lest the gods resent,
As underprized, so loud a call to joy.
I live, I love, am loved, I have her here!
Rapture, in present, and, in prospect, more!
No rival, no destroyer, no despair!
For jealousies, for partings, groans, and death,
A train of joys, the gods alone can name!
When Heaven descends in blessings so profuse,
So sudden, so surpassing hope's extreme,
Like the sun bursting from the midnight gloom,
'Tis impious to be niggards in delight;
Joy becomes duty; Heaven calls for some excess,
And transport flames as incense to the skies!

Erix. Transport how dreadful!

Dem. Turns Erixene?
Can she not bear the sunshine of our fate?
Meridian happiness is poured around us;
The laughing loves descend in swarms upon us;
And where we tread is an eternal spring!
By Heaven! I almost pity guilty Perseus
For such a loss.

Erix. That stabs me through and through!

Dem. What stabs thee?—Speak! Have I then lost thy love?

Erix. To my confusion, be it spoke—'Tis thine.

Dem. To thy confusion! Is it then a crime?
You heard how dying Dymas cleared my fame.

Erix. I heard, and trembled! heard, and ran distracted!

Dem. Astonishment!

Erix. I've nothing else to give thee.
[*He steps back in astonishment; she in agony; and both are silent for some time.*
He is struck dumb;—nor can I speak—Yet must I.
I tremble on the brink; yet must plunge in!
Know, my Demetrius, joys are for the gods;
Man's common course of nature is distress:
His joys are prodigies; and, like them too,
Portend approaching ill. The wise man starts,
And trembles at the perils of a bliss.
To hope, how bold! how daring to be fond,
When, what our fondness grasps, is not immortal!
I will presume on thy known, steady virtue,
And treat thee like a man; I will, Demetrius!
Nor longer in my bosom hide a brand,
That burns unseen, and drinks my vital blood.

Dem. What mystery?

Erix. The blackest!

Dem. How every terror doubles in the dark!
Why muffled up in silence stands my fate?
This horrid spectre let me see at once,
And shew if I'm a man.

Erix. It calls for more.

Dem. It calls for me then; love has made me more.

Erix. Oh, fortify thy soul with more than love!

To hear, what heard, thou'lt curse the tongue that tells thee!
Dem. Curse whom? Curse thee!
Erix. Yes, from thy inmost soul.
Why dost thou lift thy eyes and hands to heaven?
The powers, most conscious of this deed, reside
In darkness, howl below in raging fires,
Where pangs, like mine, corrode them. Thence arise,
Black gods of execration and despair!
Through dreadful earthquakes cleave your upward way,
While nature shakes, and vapours blot the sun;
Then, through these horrors, in loud groans, proclaim,
That I am——
Dem. What?—I'll have it, though it blast me!
Erix. Thus, then, in thunder—I am Perseus' wife!
[*Demetrius staggers and falls.—After a pause——*
Dem. In thunder!—No; that had not struck so deep!
What tempest e'er discharged so fierce a fire?
Calm and deliberate anguish feeds upon me;
Each thought sent out for help brings in new woe!
Where shall I turn? Where fly? To whom but thee, [*Kneeling.*
Tremendous Jove! whom mortals will not know
From blessings, but compel to be severe!
I feel thy vengeance, and adore thy power!
I see my failings, and absolve thy rage.
But, oh! I must perceive the load that's on me;
I can't but tremble underneath the stroke.
Aid me to bear!—But since it can't be borne,
Oh, let thy mercy burst in flames upon me!
Thy triple bolt is healing balm to this;
This pain unfelt, unfancied by the wretch,
The groaning wretch, that on the wheel expires!
Erix. Why did I tell thee?
Dem. Why commit a deed
Too shocking to be told? What fumes of hell
Flew to thy brain? What fiend the crime inspired?
Erix. Perseus, last night, as soon as thou wast fled,
At that dead hour, when good men are at rest,
When every crime and horror is abroad,
Graves yawn, fiends yell, wolves howl, and ravens scream;
Than ravens, wolves, or fiends, more fatal far,
To me he came, and threw him at my feet,
And wept, and swore, unless I gave consent
To call a priest that moment, all was ruined:
That the next day Demetrius and his powers
Might conquer, he lose me, and I my crown,
Conferred by Philip but on Perseus' wife.
I started, trembled, fainted; he invades
My half-recovered strength, bribed priests conspire,
All urge my vow, all seize my ravished hand,
Invoke the gods, run o'er the hasty rite;
While each ill omen of the sky flew o'er us,
And furies howled our nuptial song below.——
Canst thou forgive?
Dem. By all the flames of love,
And torments of despair, I never can!
The furies toss their torches from thy hand,
And all their adders hiss around thy head!
I'll see thy face no more. [*Going.*
Erix. Thy rage is just.
Yet stay and hear me! [*She kneels, and holds him.*
Dem. I have heard too much.
Erix. Till thou hast heard the whole, O do not curse me!
Dem. Where can I find a curse to reach thy crime?
Erix. Mercy! [*Weeping.*
Dem. [*Aside.*] Her tears, like drops of molten lead,
With torment burn their passage to my heart!
And yet such violation of her vows——
Erix. Mercy!
Dem. Perseus!—— [*Stamping.*
Erix. Stamp till the centre shakes,
So black a dæmon shalt thou never raise!
Perseus! Canst thou abhor him more than I?
Hell has its furies, Perseus has his love,
And, oh! Demetrius his eternal hate!
Dem. Eternal! Yes, eternal and eternal;
As deep and everlasting as my pain!
Erix. Some god descend, and soothe his soul to peace!
Dem. Talkest thou of peace? what peace hast thou bestowed?
A brain distracted, and a broken heart.
Talk'st thou of peace? Hark, hark, thy husband calls,
His father's rebel! Brother's murderer!
Nature's abhorrence, and—thy lawful lord!
Fly, my kind patroness, and in his bosom
Consult my peace.
Erix. I never shall be there.
My lord! my life!
Dem. How say'st? Is Perseus here?——
Fly, fly! away! 'tis death! 'tis incest!
[*Starting wide, and looking round him.*
Dar'st thou to touch Demetrius? Dar'st thou touch him,
Ev'n with thine eye?
[*As he is going, she lays hold of his robe.*
Erix. I dare—and more, dare seize,
And fix him here: no doubt, to thy surprise——
I'm blemished, not abandoned; honour still
Is sacred in my sight. Thou call'st it incest;
'Tis innocence, 'tis virtue; if there's virtue
In fixed, inviolable strength of love.
For know, the moment the dark deed was done,
The moment madness made me Perseus' wife,
I seized this friend, and lodged him in my bosom,
[*Shewing a dagger.*
Firmly resolved I never would be more:
And now I fling me at thy feet, imploring

Thy steadier hand to guide him to my heart.
Who wed in vengeance, wed not but to die.
Dem. Has Perseus, then, an hymeneal claim?
And no divorce, but death?—And death from me,
Who should defend thee from the world in arms?
O thou still excellent! still most beloved!
Erix. Life is the foe, that parts us; death, a friend,
All knots dissolving, joins us; and for ever.
Why so disordered? Wherefore shakes thy frame?
Look on me; do I tremble? Am I pale?
When I let loose a sigh, I'll pardon thine.
Take my example, and be bravely wretched.
True grandeur rises from surmounted ills;
The wretched only can be truly great.
If not in kindness, yet, in vengeance, strike!
'Tis not Erixene, 'tis Perseus' wife.
Thou'lt not resign me?
Dem. Not to Jove.
Erix. Then strike!
Dem. How can I strike?
[*Gazing on her with astonishment.*
Stab at the face of Heaven?
How can I strike? Yet how can I forbear?
I feel a thousand deaths debating one.
A deity stands guard on every charm,
And strikes at me.
Erix. As will thy brother soon:
He's now in arms, and may be here this hour.
Nothing so cruel as too soft a soul;
This is strange tenderness, that breaks my heart;
Strange tenderness, that dooms to double death—
To Perseus.
Dem. True—but how to shun that horror?
By wounding thee, whom savage pards would spare?
My heart's inhabitant! my soul's ambition!
By wounding thee, and bathing in thy blood;
That blood illustrious, through a radiant race
Of kings and heroes, rolling down from Gods!
Erix. Heroes, and kings, and gods themselves, must yield
To dire necessity.
Dem. Since that absolves me,
Stand firm and fair!
Erix. My bosom meets the point,
Than Perseus far more welcome to my breast.
Dem. Necessity, for gods themselves too strong,
Is weaker than thy charms. [*Drops the dagger.*
Erix. Oh, my Demetrius!
[*Turns, and goes to a farther part of the stage.*
Dem. Oh, my Erixene!
[*Both silent, weep, and tremble.*
Erix. Farewell! [*Going.*
Dem. Where goest? [*Passionately seizing her.*
Erix. To seek a friend.
Dem. He's here.
Erix. Yes, Perseus' friend———
Earth, open and receive me.
Dem. Heaven strike us dead,
And save me from a double suicide,
And one of tenfold death.—O Jove! O Jove!
[*Falling on his knees.*
But I'm distracted. [*Suddenly starting up.*
What can Jove? Why pray?
What can I pray for?
Erix. For a heart.
Dem. Yes, one,
That cannot feel. Mine bleeds at every vein.
Who never loved, ne'er suffered; he feels nothing,
Who nothing feels but for himself alone;
And, when we feel for others, reason reels,
O'erloaded, from her path, and man runs mad.
As love alone can exquisitely bless,
Love only feels the marvellous of pain;
Opens new veins of torture in the soul,
And wakes the nerve, where agonies are born.
E'en Dymas, Perseus, (hearts of adamant!)
Might weep these torments of their mortal foe.
Erix. Shall I be less compassionate than they?
[*Takes up the dagger.*
What love denied, thine agonies have done;
[*Stabs herself.*
Demetrius' sigh outstings the dart of death.

Enter the KING, *&c.*

King. Give my Demetrius to my arms; I call him
To life from death, to transport from despair.
Dem. See Perseus' wife! [*Pointing at Erix.*] let Delia tell the rest.
King. My grief-accustomed heart can guess too well.
Dem. That sight turns all to guilt, but tears and death.
King. Death! Who shall quell false Perseus, now in arms?
Who pour my tempest on the capitol?
How shall I sweeten life to thy sad spirit?——
I'll quit my throne this hour, and thou shalt reign.
Dem. You recommend that death, you would dissuade;
Ennobled thus by fame and empire lost,
As well as life! Small sacrifice to love.
[*Going to stab himself, the king runs to prevent him; but too late.*
King. Ah, hold! nor strike thy dagger through my heart!
Dem. 'Tis my first disobedience, and my last.
[*Falls.*
King. There Philip fell! There Macedon expired!
I see the Roman eagle hovering o'er us,
And the shaft broke, should bring her to the ground. [*Pointing to Demetrius.*
Dem. Hear, good Antigonus, my last request:
Tell Perseus, if he'll sheath his impious sword
Drawn on his father, I'll forgive him all;
Though poor Erixene lies bleeding by:

Her blood cries vengeance; but my father's——
peace—— [*Dies.*

King. As much his goodness wounds me, as his death.
What then are both? O Philip, once renowned!
Where is the pride of Greece, the dread of Rome,
The theme of Athens, the wide world's example,
And the god Alexander's rival, now?
Even at the foot of fortune's precipice,
Where the slave's sigh wafts pity to the prince,
And his omnipotence cries out for more!

Ant. As the swoln column of ascending smoke,
So solid swells thy grandeur, pigmy man!

King. My life's deep tragedy was planned with art,
From scene to scene, advancing in distress,
Through a sad series, to this dire result;
As if the Thracian queen conducted all,
And wrote the moral in her children's blood;
Which seas might labour to wash out in vain.
Hear it, ye nations! distant ages, hear!
And learn the dread decrees of Jove to fear:
His dread decrees the strictest balance keep;
The father groans, who made a mother weep;
But if no terror for yourselves can move,
Tremble, ye parents, for the child ye love;
For your Demetrius: mine is doomed to bleed,
A guiltless victim, for his father's deed.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

THE

GAMESTER.

BY

MOORE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

BEVERLEY, *the gamester.*
LEWSON, *his friend.*
STUKELY, *a sharper.*
JARVIS, *Beverley's steward.*
BATES, DAWSON, } *accomplices of Stukely.*
Waiter.

WOMEN.

MRS BEVERLEY, *wife to Beverley.*
CHARLOTTE, *his sister.*
LUCY, *maid to Mrs Beverley.*

Scene—London.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter MRS BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Mrs Bev. BE comforted, my dear; all may be well yet. And now, methinks, the lodging begins to look with another face. Oh, sister! sister! if these were all my hardships; if all I had to complain of were no more than quitting my house, servants, equipage, and shew, your pity would be weakness.

Char. Is poverty nothing, then?

Mrs Bev. Nothing in the world, if it affected only me. While we had a fortune, I was the happiest of the rich: and now it is gone, give me but a bare subsistence, and my husband's smiles, and I'll be the happiest of the poor. To me, now, these lodgings want nothing but their master. Why do you look at me?

Char. That I may hate my brother.

Mrs Bev. Do not talk so, Charlotte.

Char. Has he not undone you?——Oh, this pernicious vice of gaming! But, methinks his usual hours of four or five in the morning might have contented him; it was misery enough to wake for him till then. Need he have staid out all night?——I shall learn to detest him.

Mrs Bev. Not for the first fault. He never slept from me before.

Char. Slept from you! No, no, his nights have nothing to do with sleep. How has this one vice driven him from every virtue!——Nay, from his affections, too!——The time was, sister——

Mrs Bev. And is. I have no fear of his affections. Would I knew, that he were safe!

Char. From ruin and his companions. But that is impossible. His poor little boy, too! What must become of him?

Mrs Bev. Why, want shall teach him industry. From his father's mistakes he shall learn prudence, and, from his mother's resignation, patience. Poverty has no such terrors in it as you imagine. There is no condition of life, sickness

and pain excepted, where happiness is excluded. The husbandman, who rises early to his labour, enjoys more welcome rest at night for it. His bread is sweeter to him, his home happier, his family dearer, his enjoyments surer. The sun, that rouses him in the morning, sets in the evening to release him. All situations have their comforts, if sweet contentment dwell in the heart. But my poor Beverley has none. The thought of having ruined those, he loves, is misery for ever to him. Would I could ease his mind of that!

Char. If he alone were ruined, it were just he should be punished. He is my brother, it is true; but when I think of what he has done, of the fortune you brought him, of his own large estate too, squandered away upon this vilest of passions, and among the vilest of wretches! Oh, I have no patience! My own little fortune is untouched, he says. Would I were sure of it!

Mrs Bev. And so you may——it would be a sin to doubt it.

Char. I will be sure of it——it was madness in me to give it to his management. But I will demand it from him this morning. I have a melancholy occasion for it.

Mrs Bev. What occasion?

Char. To support a sister.

Mrs Bev. No; I have no need of it. Take it, and reward a lover with it. The generous Lewson deserves much more. Why won't you make him happy?

Char. Because my sister is miserable.

Mrs Bev. You must not think so. I have my jewels left yet. I will sell them to supply our wants; and, when all is gone, these hands shall toil for our support. The poor should be industrious—Why those tears, Charlotte?

Char. They flow in pity for you.

Mrs Bev. All may be well yet. When he has nothing to lose, I shall fetter him in these arms again; and then what is it to be poor?

Char. Cure him but of this destructive passion, and my uncle's death may retrieve all yet.

Mrs Bev. Ay, Charlotte, could we cure him! But the disease of play admits no cure but poverty; and the loss of another fortune would but increase his shame and affliction. Will Mr Lewson call this morning?

Char. He said so last night. He gave me hints too, that he had suspicions of our friend Stukely.

Mrs Bev. Not of treachery to my husband? That he loves play I know, but surely he is honest.

Char. He would fain be thought so; therefore I doubt him. Honesty needs no pains to set itself off.

Enter LUCY.

Mrs Bev. What now, Lucy?

Lucy. Your old steward, madam. I had not the heart to deny him admittance, the good old man begged so hard for it. [*Exit Lucy.*

Enter JARVIS.

Mrs Bev. Is this well, Jarvis? I desired you to avoid me.

Jar. Did you, madam? I am an old man, and had forgot. Perhaps, too, you forbad my tears; but I am old, madam, and age will be forgetful.

Mrs Bev. The faithful creature! how he moves me. [*To Charlotte.*

Char. Not to have seen him had been cruelty.

Jar. I have forgot these apartments too. I remember none such in my young master's house; and yet I have lived in it these five and twenty years. His good father would not have dismissed me.

Mrs Bev. He had no reason, Jarvis.

Jar. I was faithful to him, while he lived; and when he died, he bequeathed me to his son. I have been faithful to him, too.

Mrs Bev. I know it, I know it, Jarvis.

Char. We both know it.

Jar. I am an old man, madam, and have not a long time to live. I asked but to have died with him, and he dismissed me.

Mrs Bev. Prithee, no more of this! It was his poverty that dismissed you.

Jar. Is he indeed so poor, then?—Oh! he was the joy of my old heart——But must his creditors have all?—And have they sold his house too? His father built it, when he was but a prating boy. The times, that I have carried him in these arms! And, "Jarvis," says he, when a beggar has asked charity of me, "why should people be poor? You shan't be poor, Jarvis; if I were a king, nobody should be poor." Yet he is poor. And then he was so brave!——Oh, he was a brave little boy! And yet so merciful, he'd not have killed the gnat, that stung him.

Mrs Bev. Speak to him, Charlotte; for I cannot.

Char. When I have wiped my eyes.

Jar. I have a little money, madam; it might have been more, but I have loved the poor. All that I have is yours.

Mrs Bev. No, Jarvis; we have enough yet. I thank you, though, and will deserve your goodness.

Jar. But shall I see my master? And will he let me attend him in his distresses? I'll be no expence to him; and it will kill me to be refused. Where is he, madam?

Mrs Bev. Not at home, Jarvis. You shall see him another time.

Char. To-morrow, or the next day—Oh, Jarvis! what a change is here!

Jar. A change indeed, madam! my old heart aches at it. And yet, methinks——But here's somebody coming.

Enter LUCY *with* STUKELY.

Lucy. Mr Stukely, madam. [*Exit*

Stuke. Good morning to you, ladies. Mr Jarvis, your servant. Where's my friend, madam? [*To Mrs Bev.*

Mrs Bev. I should have asked that question of you. Have you seen him to-day?

Stuke. No, Madam.

Char. Nor last night?

Stuke. Last night! Did he not come home, then?

Mrs Bev. No. Were you not together?

Stuke. At the beginning of the evening; but not since. Where can he have staid?

Char. You call yourself his friend, sir; why do you encourage him in this madness of gaming?

Stuke. You have asked me that question before, madam; and I told you my concern was, that I could not save him. Mr Beverley is a man, madam; and if the most friendly entreaties have no effect upon him, I have no other means. My purse has been his, even to the injury of my fortune. If that has been encouragement, I deserve censure; but I meant it to retrieve him.

Mrs Bev. I don't doubt it, sir; and I thank you—But where did you leave him last night?

Stuke. At Wilson's, madam, if I ought to tell; in company I did not like. Possibly he may be there still. Mr Jarvis knows the house, I believe.

Jar. Shall I go, madam?

Mrs. Bev. No, he may take it ill.

Char. He may go as from himself.

Stuke. And, if he pleases, madam, without naming me. I am faulty myself, and should conceal the errors of a friend. But I can refuse nothing here. [*Bowing to the ladies.*

Jar. I would fain see him, methinks.

Mrs Bev. Do so, then; but take care how you upbraid him—I never upbraided him.

Jar. Would I could bring him comfort! [*Exit.*

Stuke. Don't be too much alarmed, madam. All men have their errors, and their times of seeing them. Perhaps, my friend's time is not come yet. But he has an uncle; and old men don't live for ever. You should look forward, madam; we are taught how to value a second fortune by the loss of a first. [*Knocking at the door.*

Mrs. Bev. Hark!——No—that knocking was too rude for Mr Beverley. Pray Heaven he be well!

Stuke. Never doubt it, madam. You shall be well, too—Every thing shall be well. [*Knocking again.*

Mrs. Bev. The knocking is a little loud, though—Who waits there? Will none of you answer?—None of you, did I say? Alas, what was I thinking of! I had forgot myself.

Char. I'll go, sister—But don't be alarmed so. [*Exit.*

Stuke. What extraordinary accident have you to fear, madam?

Mrs. Bev. I beg your pardon; but 'tis ever thus with me in Mr Beverley's absence. No one knocks at the door, but I fancy it is a messenger of ill news.

Stuke. You are too fearful, madam; 'twas but one night of absence; and if ill thoughts intrude (as love is always d ubtful), think of your worth and beauty, and drive them from your breast.

Mrs Bev. What thoughts? I have no thoughts, that wrong my husband.

Stuke. Such thoughts, indeed, would wrong him. The world is full of slander; and every wretch, that knows himself unjust, charges his neighbour with like passions; and by the general frailty hides his own———If you are wise, and would be happy, turn a deaf ear to such reports. It is ruin to believe them.

Mre. Bev. Ay, worse than ruin. It would be to sin against conviction. Why was it mentioned?

Stuke. To guard you against rumour. The sport of half mankind is mischief; and for a single error they make men devils. If their tales reach you, disbelieve them.

Mrs Bev. What tales? By whom? Why told? I have heard nothing—or if I had, with all his errors, my Beverley's firm faith admits no doubt—It is my safety, my seat of rest and joy, while the storm threatens round me. I'll not forsake it. [*Stukely sighs and looks down.*] Why turn you, sir, away? and, why that sigh?

Stuke. I was attentive, madam; and sighs will come we know not why. Perhaps, I have been too busy—If it should seem so, impute my zeal to friendship, that meant to guard you against evil tongues. Your Beverley is wronged, slandered most vilely—My life upon his truth.

Mrs Bev. And mine too. Who is it that doubts it? But no matter——I am prepared, sir ——Yet why this caution?——You are my husband's friend; I think you mine too; the common friend of both. [*Pauses.*] I had been unconcerned else.

Stuke. For Heaven's sake, madam, be so still! I mean to guard you against suspicion, not to alarm it.

Mrs Bev. Nor have you, sir. Who told you of suspicion? I have a heart it cannot reach.

Stuke. Then I am happy—I would say more; but am prevented.

Enter CHARLOTTE.

Mrs Bev. Who was it, Charlotte?

Char. What a heart has that Jarvis! A creditor, sister. But the good old man has taken him away—'Don't distress his wife; don't distress his sister,' I could hear him say. 'It is cruel to distress the afflicted'——And when he saw me at the door, he begged pardon, that his friend had knocked so loud.

Stuke. I wish I had known of this. Was it a large demand, madam?

Char. I heard not that; but visits, such as these, we must expect often—Why so distressed, sister? This is no new affliction.

Mrs Bev. No, Charlotte; but I am faint with watching—quite sunk and spiritless—Will you excuse me, sir? I'll to my chamber, and try to rest a little. [*Exit.*

Stuke. Good thoughts go with you, madam. My bait is taken, then. [*Aside.*] Poor Mrs Beverley! How my heart grieves to see her thus!

Char. Cure her, and be a friend, then.

Stuke. How cure her, madam?

Char. Reclaim my brother.

Stuke. Ay, give him a new creation, or breathe another soul into him. I'll think on it, madam. Advice, I see, is thankless.

Char. Useless I am sure it is, if through mistaken friendship, or other motives, you feed his passion with your purse, and soothe it by example. Physicians, to cure fevers, keep from the patient's thirsty lip the cup, that would inflame him. You give it to his hands. [*A knocking.*] Hark, sir!—These are my brother's desperate symptoms——Another creditor.

Stuke. One not so easily got rid of—What, Lewson!

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. Madam, your servant——Yours, sir. I was enquiring for you at your lodgings.

Stuke. This morning! You had business, then?

Lew. You'll call it by another name, perhaps. Where's Mr Beverley, madam?

Char. We have sent to enquire for him.

Lew. Is he abroad, then? He did not use to go out so early.

Char. No, nor stay out so late.

Lew. Is that the case? I am sorry for it.—But Mr Stukely, perhaps, may direct you to him.

Stuke. I have already, sir. But what was your business with me?

Lew. To congratulate you upon your late successes at play. Poor Beverley!—But you are his friend; and there's a comfort in having successful friends.

Stuke. And what am I to understand by this?

Lew. That Beverley's a poor man, with a rich friend; that's all.

Stuke. Your words would mean something, I suppose. Another time, sir, I shall desire an explanation.

Lew. And why not now? I am no dealer in long sentences. A minute or two will do for me.

Stuke. But not for me, sir. I am slow of apprehension, and must have time and privacy. A lady's presence engages my attention. Another morning I may be found at home.

Lew. Another morning, then, I'll wait upon you.

Stuke. I shall expect you, sir. Madam, your servant. [*Exit Stukely.*

Char. What mean you by this?

Lew. To hint to him, that I know him.

Char. How know him? Mere doubt and supposition!

Lew. I shall have proof soon.

Char. And what then? Would you risque your life to be his punisher?

Lew. My life, madam! Don't be afraid. And yet I am happy in your concern for me. But let it content you, that I know this Stukely——It will be as easy to make him honest as brave.

Char. And what do you intend to do?

Lew. Nothing, till I have proof. Yet my suspicions are well-grounded—But, methinks, madam, I am acting here without authority. Could I have leave to call Mr Beverley brother, his concerns would be my own. Why will you make my services appear officious?

Char. You know my reasons, and should not press me. But I am cold, you say; and cold I will be, while a poor sister's destitute——My heart bleeds for her; and, till I see her sorrows moderated, love has no joys for me.

Lew. Can I be less a friend by being a brother? I would not say an unkind thing—But the pillar of your house is shaken; prop it with another, and it shall stand firm again. You must comply.

Char. And will, when I have peace within myself. But let us change this subject—Your business here this morning is with my sister. Misfortunes press too hard upon her; yet, till today, she has borne them nobly.

Lew. Where is she?

Char. Gone to her chamber. Her spirits failed her.

Lew. I hear her coming. Let what has passed with Stukely be a secret—She has already too much to trouble her.

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY.

Mrs Bev. Good morning, sir; I heard your voice, and, as I thought, enquiring for me.—Where's Mr Stukely, Charlotte?

Char. This moment gone——You have been in tears, sister; but here's a friend shall comfort you.

Lew. Or, if I add to your distresses, I will beg your pardon, madam. The sale of your house and furniture was finished yesterday.

Mrs Bev. I know it, sir; I know too your generous reason for putting me in mind of it. But you have obliged me too much already.

Lew. There are trifles, madam, which I know you have set a value on; those I have purchased, and will deliver. I have a friend too, that esteems you——He has bought largely, and will call nothing his, till he has seen you. If a visit to him would not be painful, he has begged it may be this morning.

†

Mrs Bev. Not painful in the least. My pain is from the kindness of my friends. Why am I to be obliged beyond the power of return?

Lew. You shall repay us at your own time. I have a coach waiting at the door—Shall we have your company, madam? [*To Charlotte.*

Char. No; my brother may return soon; I'll stay and receive him.

Mrs Bev. He may want a comforter, perhaps. But dont upbraid him, Charlotte. We shall not be absent long. Come, sir, since I must be so obliged.

Lew. 'Tis I, that am obliged. An hour, or less, will be sufficient for us. We shall find you at home, madam?

[*To Charlotte, and exit with Mrs Beverley.*

Char. Certainly. I have but little inclination to appear abroad. Oh, this brother, this brother! to what wretchedness has he reduced us! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to Stukely's Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY.

Stuke. That Lewson suspects me 'tis too plain. Yet why should he suspect me? I appear the friend of Beverley as much as he. But I am rich, it seems; and so I am, thanks to another's folly, and my own wisdom. To what use is wisdom, but to take advantage of the weak? This Beverley's my fool; I cheat him, and he calls me friend. But more business must be done yet——His wife's jewels are unsold; so is the reversion of his uncle's estate: I must have these too. And then there's a treasure above all——I love his wife—Before she knew this Beverley I loved her; but, like a cringing fool, bowed at a distance, while he stepped in and won her——Never, never will I forgive him for it. My pride, as well as love, is wounded by this conquest. I must have vengeance. Those hints this morning were well thrown in——Already they have fastened on her. If jealousy should weaken her affections, want may corrupt her virtue——My heart rejoices in the hope——These jewels may do much——He shall demand them of her; which, when mine, shall be converted to special purposes——What now, Bates?

Enter BATES.

Bates. Is it a wonder, then, to see me? The forces are all in readiness, and only wait for orders. Where's Beverley?

Stuke. At last night's rendezvous, waiting for me. Is Dawson with you?

Bates. Dressed like a nobleman; with money in his pocket, and a set of dice, that shall deceive the devil.

Stuke. That fellow has a head to undo a nation; but for the rest, they are such low-mannered, ill-looking dogs, I wonder Beverley has not suspected them.

Bates. No matter for manners and looks. Do you supply them with money, and they are gentlemen by profession——The passion of gaming casts such a mist before the eyes, that the nobleman shall be surrounded with sharpers, and imagine himself in the best company.

Stuke. There's that Williams too! It was he, I suppose, that called at Beverley's with the note this morning. What directions did you give him?

Bates. To knock loud, and be clamorous. Did not you see him?

Stuke. No; the fool sneaked off with Jarvis. Had he appeared within doors, as directed, the note had been discharged. I waited there on purpose. I want the women to think well of me; for Lewson's grown suspicious; he told me so himself.

Bates. What answer did you make him?

Stuke. A short one——That I would see him soon, for farther explanation.

Bates. We must take care of him. But what have we to do with Beverley? Dawson and the rest are wondering at you.

Stuke. Why, let them wonder. I have designs above their narrow reach. They see me lend him money, and they stare at me. But they are fools. I want him to believe me beggared by him.

Bates. And what then?

Stuke. Ay, there's the question; but no matter; at night you may know more. He waits for me at Wilson's. I told the women where to find him.

Bates. To what purpose?

Stuke. To save suspicion. It looked friendly, and they thanked me. Old Jarvis was dispatched to him.

Bates. And may intreat him home——

Stuke. No; he expects money from me; but I'll have none. His wife's jewels must go——Women are easy creatures, and refuse nothing where they love. Follow to Wilson's; but be sure he sees you not. You are a man of character, you know; of prudence and discretion.—Wait for me in an outer room; I shall have business for you presently. Come, sir,

Let drudging fools by honesty grow great;
The shorter road to riches is deceit. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Gaming House, with a Table, Box, Dice, &c.* BEVERLEY *discovered sitting.*

Bev. Why, what a world is this! The slave, that digs for gold, receives his daily pittance, and sleeps contented; while those, for whom he labours, convert their good to mischief, making abundance the means of want. Oh, shame, shame! Had fortune given me but a little, that little had been still my own. But plenty leads to waste; and shallow streams maintain their currents, while swelling rivers beat down their banks, and leave their channels empty. What had I to do with play? I wanted nothing. My wishes and my means were equal. The poor followed me with blessings, love scattered roses on my pillow, and morning waked me to delight—Oh, bitter thought, that leads to what I was by what I am! I would forget both—Who's there?

Enter a Waiter.

Wait. A gentleman, sir, enquires for you.

Bev. He might have used less ceremony.——Stukely, I suppose?

Wait. No, sir, a stranger.

Bev. Well, shew him in. [*Exit Waiter.* A messenger from Stukely, then; from him, that has undone me! Yet all in friendship——And now he lends me his little, to bring back fortune to me.

Enter JARVIS.

Jarvis! Why this intrusion? Your absence had been kinder.

Jar. I came in duty, sir. If it be troublesome——

Bev. It is——I would be private——hid even from myself. Who sent you hither?

Jar. One, that would persuade you home again. My mistress is not well; her tears told me so.

Bev. Go with thy duty there, then——But does she weep? I am to blame to let her weep. Pr'ythee be gone: I have no business for thee.

Jar. Yes, sir; to lead you from this place. I am your servant still. Your prosperous fortune blessed my old age. If that has left you, I must not leave you.

Bev. Not leave me! Recall past time, then; or, through this sea of storms and darkness, shew me a star to guide me——But what canst thou?

Jar. The little that I can I will. You have been generous to me—I would not offend you, sir—but—

Bev. No. Thinkest thou I would ruin thee too! I have enough of shame already——My wife, my wife! Wouldst thou believe it, Jarvis? I have not seen her all this long night——I, who have loved her so, that every hour of absence seemed as a gap in life. But other bonds have held me——Oh, I have played the boy! dropping my counters in the stream, and, reaching to redeem them, lost myself. Why wilt thou follow misery? Or if thou wilt, go to thy mistress: she has no guilt to sting her; and therefore may be comforted.

Jar. For pity's sake, sir!——I have no heart to see this change.

Bev. Nor I to bear it——How speaks the world of me, Jarvis?

Jar. As of a good man dead. Of one, who, walking in a dream, fell down a precipice. The world is sorry for you.

Bev. Ay, and pities me. Says it not so? But I was born to infamy——I'll tell thee what it says; it calls me villain! a treacherous husband, a cruel father, a false brother; one, lost to nature and her charities; or, to say all in one short word, it calls me—Gamester!——Go to thy mistress; I'll see her presently.

Jar. And why not now? Rude people press upon her; loud, bawling creditors; wretches, who know no pity—I met one at the door; he would have seen my mistress: I wanted means of present payment, so promised it to-morrow. But others may be pressing, and she has grief enough already. Your absence hangs too heavy on her.

Bev. Tell her I'll come then. I have a moment's business. But what hast thou to do with my distresses? Thy honesty has left thee poor; and age wants comfort——Keep what thou hast for cordials, lest between thee and the grave misery steal in. I have a friend shall counsel me ——This is that friend.

Enter STUKELY.

Stuke. How fares it, Beverley? Honest Mr Jarvis, well met; I hoped to find you here. That viper, Williams! Was it not he that troubled you this morning?

Jar. My mistress heard him then?——I am sorry, that she heard him.

Bev. And Jarvis promised payment.

Stuke. That must not be. Tell him I'll satisfy him.

Jar. Will you, sir? Heaven will reward you for it.

Bev. Generous Stukely! Friendship like yours, had it ability like will, would more than balance the wrongs of fortune.

Stuke. You think too kindly of me——Make haste to Williams; his clamours may be rude else. [*To Jarvis.*

Jar. And my master will go home again—Alas! sir, we know of hearts there breaking for his absence. [*Exit.*

Bev. Would I were dead!

Stuke. Or turned hermit, counting a string of beads in a dark cave; or under a weeping willow, praying for mercy on the wicked. Ha, ha, ha!—Prithee, be a man, and leave dying to disease and old age. Fortune may be ours again; at least we'll try for it.

Bev. No; it has fooled us on too far.

Stuke. Ay, ruined us; and therefore we will sit down contented! These are the despondings of men without money; but let the shining ore chink in the pocket, and folly turns to wisdom. We are fortune's children——True, she is a fickle mother; but shall we droop because she is peevish?——No; she has smiles in store; and these her frowns are meant to brighten them.

Bev. Is this a time for levity? But you are single in the ruin, and therefore may talk lightly of it. With me it is complicated misery.

Stuke. You censure me unjustly——I but assumed these spirits to cheer my friend. Heaven knows he wants a comforter.

Bev. What new misfortune?

Stuke. I would have brought you money, but lenders want securities. What is to be done? All that was mine is yours already.

Bev. And there is the double weight, that sinks me. I have undone my friend too; one who, to save a drowning wretch, reached out his hand, and perished with him.

Stuke. Have better thoughts!

Bev. Whence are they to proceed? I have nothing left.

Stuke. [*Sighing.*] Then we are indeed undone. What, nothing? No moveables, nor useless trinkets? Baubles locked up in caskets to starve their owners? I have ventured deeply for you.

Bev. Therefore this heart-ache; for I am lost beyond all hope.

Stuke. No; means may be found to save us. Jarvis is rich. Who made him so? This is no time for ceremony.

Bev. And is it for dishonesty? The good old man! Shall I rob him too? My friend would grieve for it. No; let the little, that he has, buy food and clothing for him.

Stuke. Good morning, then. [*Going.*

Bev. So hasty! Why then, good morning.

Stuke. And when we meet again, upbraid me. Say it was I, that tempted you. Tell Lewson so; and tell him I have wronged you——He has suspicions of me, and will thank you.

Bev. No; we have been companions in a rash voyage, and the same storm has wrecked us both. Mine shall be self-upbraidings.

Stuke. And will they feed us? You deal unkindly by me. I have sold and borrowed for you, while land or credit lasted; and now, when fortune should be tried, and my heart whispers me success, I am deserted; turned loose to beggary, while you have hoards.

Bev. What hoards? Name them, and take them.

Stuke. Jewels.

Bev. And shall this thriftless hand seize them too? My poor, poor wife! Must she lose all? I would not wound her so.

Stuke. Nor I, but from necessity. One effort more, and fortune may grow kind. I have unusual hopes.

Bev. Think of some other means then.

Stuke. I have; and you rejected them.

Bev. Prithee, let me be a man.

Stuke. Ay, and your friend a poor one. But I have done. And for these trinkets of a woman, why, let her keep them to deck out pride with, and shew a laughing world, that she has finery to starve in.

Bev. No; she shall yield up all. My friend demands it. But need we have talked lightly of her? The jewels, that she values, are truth and innocence—Those will adorn her ever; and for the rest, she wore them for a husband's pride, and to his wants will give them. Alas! you know her not. Where shall we meet?

Stuke. No matter. I have changed my mind. Leave me to a prison; it is the reward of friendship.

Bev. Perish mankind first——Leave you to a prison! No; fallen as you see me, I am not that wretch. Nor would I change this heart, overcharged as it is with folly and misfortune, for one most prudent and most happy, if callous to a friend's distress.

Stuke. You are too warm.

Bev. In such a cause not to be warm is to be frozen. Farewell. I will meet you at your lodgings.

Stuke. Reflect a little. The jewels may be lost. Better not hazard them—I was too pressing.

Bev. And I ungrateful. Reflection takes up time. I have no leisure for it. Within an hour expect me. [*Exit.*

Stuke. The thoughtless shallow prodigal! We shall have sport at night, then—But hold——The jewels are not ours yet—The lady may refuse them—The husband may relent too—It is more than probable—I will write a note to Beverley, and the contents shall spur him to demand them ——But am I grown this rogue through avarice? No; I have warmer motives, love and revenge—Ruin the husband, and the wife's virtue may be bid for. It is of uncertain value, and sinks or rises in the purchase, as want, or wealth, or passion governs. The poor part cheaply with it; rich dames, though pleased with selling, will have high prices for it. Your love-sick girls give it for oaths and lying. But tender wives, who boast of honour and affections, keep it against famine—Why, let famine come, then! I am in haste to purchase.

Enter BATES.

Look to your men, Bates; there's money stirring. We meet to-night upon this spot. Hasten, and

tell them so. Beverley calls upon me at my lodgings, and we return together. Hasten, I say; the rogues will scatter else.

Bates. Not till their leader bids them.

Stuke. Come on then. Give them the word, and follow me; I must advise with you——This is a day of business. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to* BEVERLEY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Char. Your looks are changed too; there is wildness in them. My wretched sister! How will it grieve her to see you thus!

Bev. No, no—a little rest will ease me. And for your Lewson's kindness to her, it has my thanks; I have no more to give him.

Char. Yes; a sister and her fortune. I trifle with him, and he complains—My looks, he says, are cold upon him. He thinks too——

Bev. That I have lost your fortune——He dares not think so.

Char. Nor does he—You are too quick at guessing. He cares not, if you had. That care is mine—I lent it you to husband, and now I claim it.

Bev. You have suspicions, then?

Char. Cure them, and give it me.

Bev. To stop a sister's chiding?

Char. To vindicate her brother.

Bev. How if he needs no vindication?

Char. I would fain hope so.

Bev. Ay, would and cannot. Leave it to time, then; 'twill satisfy all doubts:

Char. Mine are already satisfied.

Bev. 'Tis well. And when the subject is renewed, speak to me like a sister, and I will answer like a brother.

Char. To tell me I am a beggar. Why, tell it now. I that can bear the ruin of those dearer to me, the ruin of a sister and her infant, can bear that too.

Bev. No more of this——you wring my heart.

Char. Would that the misery were all your own! But innocence must suffer——Unthinking rioter! whose home was heaven to him; an angel dwelt there, and a little cherub, that crowned his days with blessings.—How he has lost this heaven to league with devils!

Bev. Forbear, I say; reproaches come too late; they search, but cure not. And for the fortune you demand, we'll talk to-morrow on it; our tempers may be milder.

Char. Or, if 'tis gone, why farewell all. I claimed it for a sister. She holds my heart in hers; and every pang she feels tears it in pieces——But I'll upbraid no more. What Heaven permits, perhaps, it may ordain; and sorrow then is sinful. Yet that the husband! father! brother! should be its instruments of vengeance!——'Tis grievous to know that.

Bev. If you are my sister, spare the remembrance—it wounds too deeply. To-morrow shall clear all; and when the worst is known, it may be better than your fears. Comfort my wife; and for the pains of absence I'll make atonement. The world may yet go well with us.

Char. See, where she comes!——Look chearfully upon her——Affections such as hers are prying, and lend those eyes, that read the soul.

Enter Mrs. BEVERLEY *and* LEWSON.

Mrs. Bev. My life!

Bev. My love! how fares it? I have been a truant husband.

Mrs. Bev. But we meet now, and that heals all—Doubts and alarms I have had; but in this dear embrace I bury and forget them. My friend here [*pointing to* Lewson] has been indeed a friend. Charlotte, it is you must thank him: your brother's thanks and mine are of too little value.

Bev. Yet what we have we'll pay. I thank you, sir, and am obliged. I would say no more, but that your goodness to the wife upbraids the husband's follies. Had I been wise, she had not trespassed on your bounty.

Lew. Nor has she trespassed. The little I have done, acceptance overpays.

Char. So friendship thinks——

Mrs. Bev. And doubles obligations by striving to conceal them——We'll talk another time on it——You are too thoughtful, love.

Bev. No, I have reason for these thoughts.

Char. And hatred for the cause—Would you had that too!

Bev. I have——The cause was avarice.

Char. And who the tempter?

Bev. A ruined friend—ruined by too much kindness.

Lew. Ay, worse than ruined; stabbed in his fame, mortally stabbed—riches cannot cure him.

Bev. Or if they could, those I have drained him of. Something of this he hinted in the morning—that Lewson had suspicions of him——Why these suspicions? [*Angrily.*

Lew. At school we knew this Stukely. A cunning, plodding, boy he was, sordid and cruel, slow at his task, but quick at shifts and tricking. He schemed out mischief, that others might be punished; and would tell his tale with so much art, that for the lash he merited, rewards and praise were given him. Shew me a boy with such a mind, and time, that ripens manhood in him, shall ripen vice too——I will prove him, and lay him open to you——Till then be warned——I know him, and therefore shun him.

Bev. As I would those, that wrong him.—You are too busy, sir.

Mrs. Bev. No, not too busy——Mistaken, perhaps——That had been milder.

Lew. No matter, madam. I can bear this,

and praise the heart that prompts it—Pity such friendship should be so placed!

Bev. Again, sir! But I'll bear too—You wrong him, Lewson, and will be sorry for it.

Char. Ay, when 'tis proved he wrongs him. The world is full of hypocrites.

Bev. And Stukely one—so you would infer, I think.——I will hear no more of this—my heart aches for him——I have undone him.

Lew. The world says otherwise.

Bev. The world is false then——I have busines with you, love. [*To Mrs. Bev.*] We'll leave them to their rancour. [*Going*

Char. No; we shall find room within for it.—Come this way, sir. [*To Lew.*

Lew. Another time my friend will thank me; that time is hastening too.

[*Exeunt Lew. and Char.*

Bev. They hurt me beyond bearing——Is Stukely false? Then honesty has left us! 'Twere sinning against Heaven to think so.

Mrs. Bev. I never doubted him.

Bev. No; you are charity. Meekness and ever-during patience live in that heart, and love that knows no change.——Why did I ruin you?

Mrs. Bev. You have not ruined me. I have no wants, when you are present, nor wishes in your absence but to be blest with your return. Be but resigned to what has happened, and I am rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

Bev. My generous girl!——But memory will be busy; still crowding on my thoughts, to sour the present by the past. I have another pang too.

Mrs. Bev. Tell it, and let me cure it.

Bev. That friend——that generous friend, whose fame they have traduced——I have undone him too. While he had means he lent me largely; and now a prison must be his portion.

Mrs. Bev. No; I hope otherwise.

Bev. To hope must be to act. The charitable wish feeds not the hungry——Something must be done.

Mrs. Bev. What?

Bev. In bitterness of heart he told me, just now he told me, I had undone him. Could I hear that, and think of happiness? No! I have disclaimed it, while he is miserable.

Mrs. Bev. The world may mend with us, and then we may be grateful. There's comfort in that hope.

Bev. Ay; it is the sick man's cordial, his promised cure; while in preparing it the patient dies.——What now?

Enter LUCY.

Lucy. A letter, sir. [*Delivers it, and exit.*

Bev. The hand is Stukely's.

[*Opens it, and reads it to himself.*

Mrs Bev. And brings good news—at least I will hope so——What says he, love?

Bev. Why this—too much for patience. Yet he directs me to conceal it from you. [*Reads.*]

'Let your haste to see me be the only proof of
'your esteem for me. I have determined, since
'we parted, to bid adieu to England; chusing ra-
'ther to forsake my country, than owe my free-
'dom in it to the means we talked of. Keep this
'a secret at home, and hasten to the ruined

R. STUKELY.'

Ruined by friendship!——I must relieve or follow him.

Mrs Bev. Follow him, did you say? Then I am lost indeed!

Bev. O this infernal vice! how has it sunk me! A vice, whose highest joy was poor to my domestic happiness. Yet how have I pursued it! turned all my comforts to bitterest pangs, and all my smiles to tears. Damned, damned infatuation!

Mrs Bev. Be cool, my life! What are the means the letter talks of? Have you—have I those means? Tell me, and ease me. I have no life while you are wretched.

Bev. No, no: it must not be. 'Tis I alone have sinned; 'tis I alone must suffer. You shall reserve those means to keep my child, and his wronged mother, from want and wretchedness.

Mrs Bev. What means?

Bev. I came to rob you of them—but cannot, dare not—Those jewels are your sole support—I should be more than monster to request them.

Mrs Bev. My jewels! Trifles, not worth the speaking of, if weighed against a husband's peace; let them but purchase that, and the world's wealth is of less value.

Bev. Amazing goodness! How little do I seem before such virtues!

Mrs Bev. No more, my love. I kept them till occasion called to use them; now is the occasion, and I will resign them cheerfully.

Bev. Why, we will be rich in love then. But this excess of kindness melts me. Yet for a friend one would do much—He has denied me nothing.

Mrs Bev. Come to my closet—But let him manage wisely. We have no more to give him.

Bev. Where learnt my love this excellence? 'Tis Heaven's own teaching: that Heaven, which to an angel's form has given a mind more lovely. I am unworthy of you, but will deserve you better.

Henceforth my follies and neglects shall cease,
And all to come be penitence and peace;
Vice shall no more attract me with her charms,
Nor pleasure reach me, but in these dear arms.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—STUKELY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY *and* BATES.

Stuke. So runs the world, Bates. Fools are the natural prey of knaves; nature designed them so, when she made lambs for wolves. The laws, that fear and policy have framed, nature disclaims: she knows but two, and those are force and cunning. The nobler law is force; but then there's danger in it: while cunning, like a skilful miner, works safely and unseen.

Bates. And therefore wisely. Force must have nerves and sinews; cunning wants neither. The dwarf that has it shall trip the giant's heels up.

Stuke. And bind him to the ground. Why, we will erect a shrine for nature, and be her oracles. Conscience is weakness; fear made it, and fear maintains it. The dread of shame, inward reproaches, and fictitious burnings swell out the phantom. Nature knows none of this; her laws are freedom.

Bates. Sound doctrine, and well delivered!

Stuke. We are sincere, too, and practise what we teach. Let the grave pedant say as much. But now to business—the jewels are disposed of, and Beverley again worth money. He waits to count his gold out, and then comes hither. If my design succeeds, this night we finish with him—go to your lodgings, and be busy—You understand conveyances, and make ruin sure.

Bates. Better stop here. The sale of this reversion may be talked of—there's danger in it.

Stuke. No; 'tis the mark I aim at. We will thrive and laugh. You are the purchaser, and there's the payment. [*Giving a pocket book.*]—He thinks you rich; and so you shall be. Enquire for titles, and deal hardly; 'twill look like honesty.

Bates. How if he suspects us?

Stuke. Leave it to me. I study hearts, and when to work upon them. Go to your lodgings; and if we come, be busy over papers. Talk of a thoughtless age, of gaming and extravagance; you have a face for it.

Bates. A feeling, too, that would avoid it. We push too far; but I have cautioned you. If it ends ill, you will think of me; and so, adieu.

[*Exit.*

Stuke. This fellow sins by halves; his fears are conscience to him. I will turn these fears to use. Rogues, that dread shame, will still be greater rogues to hide their guilt—this shall be thought of. Lewson grows troublesome—we must get rid of him—he knows too much. I have a tale for Beverley; part of it truth, too—he shall call Lewson to account—if it succeeds, 'tis well; if not, we must try other means—but here he comes—I must dissemble.

Enter BEVERLEY.

Look to the door there! [*In a seeming fright.*]—My friend! I thought of other visitors.

Bev. No; these shall guard you from them—[*Offering notes.*] Take them, and use them cautiously—The world deals hardly by us.

Stuke. And shall I leave you destitute? No: your wants are the greatest. Another climate may treat me kinder. The shelter of to-night takes me from this.

Bev. Let these be your support, then—yet is there need of parting? I may have means again; we will share them, and live wisely.

Stuke. No: I should tempt you on. Habit is nature in me: ruin cannot cure it. Even now I would be gaming. Taught by experience as I am, and knowing this poor sum is all that is left us, I am for venturing still—and say I am to blame—yet will this little supply our wants? No, we must put it out to usury. Whether 'tis madness in me, or some restless impulse of good fortune, I yet am ignorant; but——

Bev. Take it, and succeed then. I will try no more.

Stuke. 'Tis surely impulse; it pleads so strongly—but you are cold—we will even part here, then. And for this last reserve, keep it for better uses; I will have none of it. I thank you, though, and will seek fortune singly: one thing I had forgot——

Bev. What is it?

Stuke. Perhaps, 'twere best forgotten. But I am open in my nature, and zealous for the honour of my friend——Lewson speaks freely of you.

Bev. Of you, I know, he does.

Stuke. I can forgive him for it; but, for my friend I am angry.

Bev. What says he of me?

Stuke. That Charlotte's fortune is embezzled—he talks of it loudly.

Bev. He shall be silenced, then—how heard you of it?

Stuke. From many. He questioned Bates about it. You must account with him, he says.

Bev. Or he with me—and soon, too.

Stuke. Speak mildly to him. Cautions are best.

Bev. I will think on it—but whither go you?

Stuke. From poverty and prisons—no matter whither. If fortune changes, you may hear from me.

Bev. May these be prosperous, then. [*Offering the notes, which he refuses.*] Nay, they are yours—I have sworn it, and will have nothing—take them and use them.

Stuke. Singly, I will not—my cares are for my

friend; for his lost fortune and ruined family.—All separate interests I disclaim. Together we have fallen; together we must rise. My heart, my honour, and affections, all will have it so.

Bev. I am weary of being fooled.

Stuke. And so am I—here let us part, then—these bodings of good fortune shall all be stifled; call them folly, and forget them—this one embrace, and then farewell. [*Offering to embrace.*

Bev. No; stay a moment—how my poor heart's distracted! I have these bodings too; but whether caught from you, or prompted by my good or evil genius, I know not—the trial shall determine—and yet, my wife.

Stuke. Ay, ay, she will chide.

Bev. No; my chidings are all here.

[*Pointing to his heart.*

Stuke. I will not persuade you.

Bev. I am persuaded; by reason too; the strongest reason—necessity. Oh, could I but regain the height I have fallen from! Heaven should forsake me in my latest hour, if I again mixed in these scenes, or sacrificed the husband's peace, his joy and best affections, to avarice and infamy.

Stuke. I have resolved like you; and since our motives are so honest, why should we fear success?

Bev. Come on, then—where shall we meet?

Stuke. At Wilson's—yet if it hurts you, leave me: I have misled you often.

Bev. We have misled each other—but come! Fortune is fickle, and may be tired with plaguing us—there let us rest our hopes.

Stuke. Yet think a little——

Bev. I cannot—thinking but distracts me.
When desperation leads, all thoughts are vain;
Reason would lose what rashness may obtain.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to* BEVERLEY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Char. 'Twas all a scheme, a mean one; unworthy of my brother.

Mrs Bev. No; I am sure it was not—Stukely is honest too; I know he is—this madness has undone them both.

Char. My brother's irrecoverable—you are too spiritless a wife—a mournful tale, mixed with a few kind words, will steal away your soul. The world's too subtle for such goodness. Had I been by, he should have asked your life sooner than those jewels.

Mrs Bev. He should have had it then. [*Warmly.*] I live but to oblige him. She, who can love, and is beloved like me, will do as much.—Men have done more for mistresses, and women for a base deluder: and shall a wife do less? Your chidings hurt me, Charlotte.

Char. And come too late; they might have saved you else. How could he use you so?

Mrs Bev. 'Twas friendship did it. His heart was breaking for a friend.

Char. The friend that has betrayed him.

Mrs Bev. Pr'ythee do not think so.

Char. To-morrow he accounts with me.

Mrs Bev. And fairly—I will not doubt it.

Char. Unless a friend has wanted—I have no patience—Sister! sister! we are bound to curse this friend!

Mrs. Bev. My Beverley speaks nobly of him.

Char. And Lewson truly—But I displease you with this talk.——To-morrow will instruct us.

Mrs. Bev. Stay till it comes then—I would not think so hardly.

Char. Nor I, but from conviction—Yet we have hope of better days. My uncle is infirm, and of an age that threatens hourly—Or, if he lives, you never have offended him; and for distresses so unmerited he will have pity.

Mrs. Bev. I know it, and am cheerful. We have no more to lose; and for what's gone, if it brings prudence home, the purchase was well made.

Char. My Lewson will be kind too. While he and I have life and means, you shall divide with us—And see, he's here.

Enter LEWSON.

We were just speaking of you.

Lew. 'Tis best to interrupt you then. Few characters will bear a scrutiny; and where the bad outweighs the good, he is safest that is least talked of. What say you, madam?

[*To Charlotte.*

Char. That I hate scandal, though a woman—therefore talk seldom of you.

Mrs. Bev. Or, with more truth, that though a woman, she loves to praise——therefore talks always of you. I'll leave you to decide it. [*Exit.*

Lew. How good and amiable! I came to talk in private with you; of matters that concern you.

Char. What matters?

Lew. First answer me sincerely to what I ask.

Char. I will——But you alarm me.

Lew. I am too grave, perhaps; but be assured of this, I have no news that troubles me, and therefore should not you.

Char. I am easy, then—propose your question.

Lew. It is now a tedious twelvemonth, since, with an open and kind heart, you said you loved me.

Char. So tedious, did you say?

Lew. And when, in consequence of such sweet words, I pressed for marriage, you gave a voluntary promise, that you would live for me.

Char. You think me changed, then? [*Angrily.*

Lew. I did not say so. A thousand times I have pressed for the performance of this promise: but private cares, a brother's and a sister's ruin, were reasons for delaying it.

Char. I had no other reasons.—Where will this end?

Lew. It shall end presently.

Char. Go on, sir.

Lew. A promise, such as this, given freely, not extorted, the world thinks binding; but I think otherwise.

Char. And would release me from it?

Lew. You are too impatient, madam.

Char. Cool, sir—quite cool—Pray go on.

Lew. Time, and a near acquaintance with my faults, may have brought change—if it be so, or for a moment, if you have wished this promise were unmade, here I acquit you of it——This is my question, then; and with such plainness as I ask it, I shall entreat an answer. Have you repented of this promise?

Char. Stay, sir. The man, that can suspect me, shall find me changed——Why am I doubted?

Lew. My doubts are of myself. I have my faults, and you have observation. If from my temper, my words, or actions, you have conceived a thought against me, or even a wish for separation, all that has passed is nothing.

Char. You startle me—But tell me—I must be answered first. Is it from honour you speak this? Or do you wish me changed?

Lew. Heaven knows I do not. Life and my Charlotte are so connected, that to lose one, were loss of both. Yet for a promise, though given in love, and meant for binding; if time or accident, or reason should change opinion—with me that promise has no force.

Char. Why, now I'll answer you. Your doubts are prophecies——I am really changed.

Lew. Indeed!

Char. I could torment you now, as you have me; but it is not in my nature. That I am changed, I own: for what at first was inclination is now grown reason in me; and from that reason, had I the world—nay, were I poorer than the poorest, and you too wanting bread, with but a hovel to invite me to——I would be yours, and happy.

Lew. My kindest Charlotte! [*Taking her hand.*] Thanks are too poor for this—and words too weak! But if we love so, why should our union be delayed?

Char. For happier times. The present are too wretched.

Lew. I may have reasons, that press it now.

Char. What reasons?

Lew. The strongest reasons; unanswerable ones.

Char. Be quick and name them.

Lew. No, madam; I am bound in honour to make conditions first——I am bound by inclination too. This sweet profusion of kind words pains, while it pleases. I dread the losing you.

Char. Astonishment! what mean you?

Lew. First promise, that to-morrow, or the next day, you will be mine for ever.

Char. I do—though misery should succeed.

Lew. Thus, then, I seize you! And with you every joy on this side Heaven!

Char. And thus I seal my promise. [*Embracing him.*] Now, sir, your secret.

Lew. Your fortune's lost.

Char. My fortune's lost! I'll study to be humble, then. But was my promise claimed for this? How nobly generous! Where learned you this sad news?

Lew. From Bates, Stukely's prime agent. I have obliged him, and he's grateful—He told it me in friendship, to warn me from my Charlotte.

Char. 'Twas honest in him, and I'll esteem him for it.

Lew. He knows much more than he has told.

Char. For me it is enough. And for your generous love, I thank you from my soul. If you would oblige me more, give me a little time.

Lew. Why time? It robs us of our happiness.

Char. I have a task to learn first. The little pride this fortune gave me must be subdued.—Once we were equal; and might have met obliging and obliged. But now it is otherwise; and for a life of obligations, I have not learned to bear it.

Lew. Mine is that life. You are too noble.

Char. Leave me to think on it.

Lew. To-morrow, then, you will fix my happiness?

Char. All that I can, I will.

Lew. It must be so; we live but for each other. Keep what you know a secret; and when we meet to-morrow, more may be known. Farewell. [*Exit.*

Char. My poor, poor sister! how would this wound her! But I will conceal it, and speak comfort to her. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Changes to a room in a gaming house.*

Enter BEVERLEY *and* STUKELY.

Bev. Whither would you lead me? [*Distractedly.*

Stuke. Where we may vent our curses.

Bev. Ay, on yourself, and those damned counsels, that have destroyed me. A thousand fiends were in that bosom, and let all loose to tempt me—I had resisted else.

Stuke. Go on, sir—I have deserved this from you.

Bev. And curses everlasting—Time is too scanty for them—

Stuke. What have I done?

Bev. What the arch-devil of old did—soothed with false hopes for certain ruin.

Stuke. Myself unhurt; nay, pleased at your destruction—So your words mean. Why, tell it to the world. I am too poor to find a friend in it.

Bev. A friend! What's he? I had a friend,

Stuke. And have one still.

Bev. Ay; I'll tell you of this friend. He found me happiest of the happy. Fortune and honour crowned me; and love and peace lived in my heart. One spark of folly lurked there;—that too he found; and by deceitful breath blew into flames, that have consumed me. This friend were you to me.

Stuke. A little more, perhaps—The friend, who gave his all to save you; and, not succeeding, chose ruin with you. But no matter, I have undone you, and am a villain.

Bev. No; I think not——The villains are within.

Stuke. What villains?

Bev. Dawson and the rest—We have been dupes to sharpers.

Stuke. How know you this? I have had doubts as well as you; yet still as fortune changed I blushed at my own thoughts. But you have proof, perhaps.

Bev. Ay, damned ones. Repeated losses—Night after night, and no reverse—Chance has no hand in this.

Stuke. I think more charitably; yet I am peevish in my nature, and apt to doubt—The world speaks fairly of this Dawson, so it does of the rest. We have watched them closely too. But 'tis a right usurped by losers, to think the winners knaves—We will have more manhood in us.

Bev. I know not what to think. This night has stung me to the quick—Blasted my reputation too—I have bound my honour to these vipers; played meanly upon credit, 'till I tired them; and now they shun me to rifle one another. What is to be done?

Stuke. Nothing. My counsels have been fatal.

Bev. By Heaven I'll not survive this shame—Traitor! 'tis you have brought it on me. [*Taking hold of him.*] Shew me the means to save me, or I'll commit a murder here, and next upon myself!

Stuke. Why do it then, and rid me of ingratitude.

Bev. Prithee forgive this language—I speak I know not what—Rage and despair are in my heart, and hurry me to madness. My home is horror to me—I'll not return to it. Speak quickly; tell me, if, in this wreck of fortune, one hope remains? Name it, and be my oracle.

Stuke. To vent your curses on—You have bestowed them liberally. Take your own counsel; and should a desperate hope present itself, it will suit your desperate fortune. I'll not advise you.

Bev. What hope? By heaven I'll catch at it, however desperate. I am so sunk in misery, it cannot lay me lower.

Stuke. You have an uncle.

Bev. Ay, what of him?

Stuke. Old men live long by temperance;—while their heirs starve on expectation.

Bev. What mean you?

Stuke. That the reversion of his estate is yours, and will bring money to pay debts with; Nay more, it may retrieve what's past.

Bev. Or leave my child a beggar.

Stuke. And what is his father! a dishonourable one; engaged for sums he cannot pay—That should be thought of.

Bev. It is my shame—the poison, that inflames me. Where shall we go? To whom? I am impatient till all is lost.

Stuke. All may be yours again—Your man is Bates—He has large funds at his command, and will deal justly by you.

Bev. I am resolved—Tell them within we will meet them presently; and with full purses, too ——Come, follow me.

Stuke. No. I have no hand in this; nor do I counsel it—Use your discretion, and act from that. You will find me at my lodgings.

Bev. Succeed what will, this night I'll dare the worst;
'Tis loss of fear to be completely cursed.
[*Exit.*

Stuke. Why, lose it then for ever.——Fear is the mind's worst evil; and 'tis a friendly office to drive it from the bosom. Thus far has fortune crowned me—Yet Beverley is rich; rich in his wife's best treasure—her honour and affections. I would supplant him there too. But it is the curse of thinking minds to raise up difficulties. Fools only conquer women. Fearless of dangers, which they see not, they press on boldly, and, by persisting, prosper. Yet may a tale of art do much—Charlotte is sometimes absent. The seeds of jealousy are sown already. If I mistake not, they have taken root too. Now is the time to ripen them, and reap the harvest. The softest of her sex, if wronged in love, or thinking that she's wronged, becomes a tygress in revenge.—I'll instantly to Beverley's—No matter for danger.—When beauty leads us on, it is indiscretion to reflect, and cowardice to doubt. [*Exit.*

SCENE IV.—*Changes to* BEVERLEY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY *and* LUCY.

Mrs Bev. Did Charlotte tell you any thing?

Lucy. No, madam.

Mrs Bev. She looked confused, methought; said she had business with her Lewson; which, when I pressed to know, tears only were her answer.

Lucy. She seemed in haste, too—Yet her return may bring you comfort.

Mrs Bev. No, my kind girl; I was not born for it. But why do I distress thee? Thy sympathizing heart bleeds for the ills of others.—What pity, that thy mistress cannot reward thee! But there is a Power above, that sees, and will remember, all. [*Knocking.*] Prithee soothe me with the song thou sung'st last night. It suits

this change of fortune; and there is a melancholy in it that pleases me.

Lucy. I fear it hurts you, madam. Your goodness, too, draws tears from me. But I will dry them, and obey you.

SONG.

When Damon languished at my feet,
And I believed him true,
The moments of delight how sweet!
But, ah! how swift they flew!
The sunny hill, the flowery vale,
The garden and the grove,
Have echoed to his ardent tale,
And vows of endless love.

The conquest gained, he left his prize,
He left her to complain,
To talk of joy with weeping eyes,
And measure time by pain.
But Heaven will take the mourner's part,
In pity to despair;
And the last sigh, that rends the heart,
Shall waft the spirit there.

Mrs Bev. I thank thee, Lucy; I thank Heaven too, my griefs are none of these. Yet Stukely deals in hints; he talks of rumours; I will urge him to speak plainly.——Hark! there is some one entering.

Lucy. Perhaps it is my master, madam. [*Exit.*

Mrs Bev. Let him be well too, and I am satisfied. [*Goes to the door and listens.*] No, it is another's voice; his had been music to me. Who is it, Lucy?

Re-enter LUCY *with* STUKELY.

Lucy. Mr Stukely, madam. [*Exit.*

Stuke. To meet you thus alone, madam, was what I wished. Unseasonable visits, when friendship warrants them, need no excuse; therefore I make none.

Mrs Bev. What mean you, sir? And where is your friend?

Stuke. Men may have secrets, madam, which their best friends are not admitted to. We parted in the morning, not soon to meet again.

Mrs Bev. You mean to leave us then; to leave your country too? I am no stranger to your reasons, and pity your misfortunes.

Stuke. Your pity has undone you. Could Beverley do this? That letter was a false one; a mean contrivance to rob you of your jewels.—I wrote it not.

Mrs Bev. Impossible! Whence came it then?

Stuke. Wronged as I am, madam, I must speak plainly.

Mrs Bev. Do so, and ease me. Your hints have troubled me. Reports, you say, are stirring—Reports of whom? You wished me not to credit them. What, sir, are these reports?

Stuke. I thought them slander, madam; and cautioned you in friendship, lest, from officious tongues, the tale had reached you with double aggravation.

Mrs Bev. Proceed, sir.

Stuke. It is a debt due to my fame; due to an injured wife too—We are both injured.

Mrs Bev. How injured? And who has injured us?

Stuke. My friend, your husband.

Mrs Bev. You would resent for both, then—But know, sir, my injuries are my own, and do not need a champion.

Stuke. Be not too hasty, madam. I come not in resentment, but for acquittance. You thought me poor; and to the feigned distresses of a friend gave up your jewels.

Mrs Bev. I gave them to a husband.

Stuke. Who gave them to a————

Mrs Bev. What, whom did he give them to?

Stuke. A mistress.

Mrs Bev. No, on my life he did not.

Stuke. Himself confessed it, with curses on her avarice.

Mrs Bev. I will not believe it—He has no mistress; or if he has, why is it told to me?

Stuke. To guard you against insults. He told me, that, to move you to compliance, he forged that letter, pretending I was ruined, ruined by him too. The fraud succeeded: and what a trusting wife bestowed in pity, was lavished on a wanton!

Mrs Bev. Then I am lost indeed! and my afflictions are too powerful for me. His follies I have borne without upbraiding, and saw the approach of poverty without a tear.——My affections, my strong affections, supported me through every trial.

Stuke. Be patient, madam.

Mrs Bev. Patient! the barbarous, ungrateful man! And does he think, that the tenderness of my heart is his best security for wounding it? But he shall find, that injuries such as these, can arm my weakness for vengeance and redress.

Stuke. Ha! then I may succeed. [*Aside.*] Redress is in your power.

Mrs Bev. What redress?

Stuke. Forgive me, madam, if, in my zeal to serve you, I hazard your displeasure. Think of your wretched state. Already want surrounds you. Is it in patience to bear that? To see your helpless little one robbed of his birth-right? A sister, too, with unavailing tears, lamenting her lost fortune? No comfort left you, but ineffectual pity from the few, outweighed by insults from the many?

Mrs Bev. Am I so lost a creature?——Well, sir, my redress?

Stuke. To be resolved is to secure it. The marriage vow, once violated, is, in the sight of Heaven, dissolved.—Start not, but hear me. 'Tis now the summer of your youth; time has not cropt the roses from your cheek, though sorrow

long has washed them. Then use your beauty wisely, and, freed by injuries, fly from the cruellest of men for shelter with the kindest!

Mrs Bev. And who is he?

Stuke. A friend to the unfortunate; a bold one too, who, while the storm is bursting on your brow, and lightning flashing from your eyes, dares tell you, that he loves you.

Mrs Bev. Would that these eyes had Heaven's own lightning, that, with a look, thus I might blast thee! Am I then fallen so low? Has poverty so humbled me, that I should listen to a hellish offer, and sell my soul for bread? Oh, villain, villain!——But now I know thee, and thank thee for the knowledge.

Stuke. If you are wise, you shall have cause to thank me.

Mrs Bev. An injured husband, too, shall thank thee.

Stuke. Yet know, proud woman, I have a heart as stubborn as your own: as haughty and imperious; and as it loves, so can it hate.

Mrs. Bev. Mean, despicable villain! I scorn thee and thy threats. Was it for this, that Beverley was false? that his too credulous wife should, in despair and vengeance, give up her honour to a wretch? But he shall know it, and vengeance shall be his.

Stuke. Why send him for defiance then. Tell him I love his wife; but that a worthless husband forbids our union. I will make a widow of you, and court you honourably.

Mrs. Bev. Oh, coward, coward! thy soul will shrink at him. Yet, in the thought of what may happen, I feel a woman's fears. Keep thy own secret, and begone. Who's there?

Enter LUCY.

Your absence, sir, would please me.

Stuke. I will not offend you, madam.

[*Exit Stukely with Lucy.*

Mrs. Bev. Why opens not the earth to swallow such a monster? Be conscience, then, his punisher, till Heaven, in mercy, gives him penitence, or dooms him in his justice.

Re-enter LUCY.

Come to my chamber, Lucy; I have a tale to tell thee, shall make thee weep for thy poor mistress.

Yet heaven the guiltless sufferer regards;
And whom it most afflicts it most rewards.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—BEVERLEY'S *lodgings.*

Enter Mrs. BEVERLEY, CHARLOTTE, and LEWSON.

Char. THE smooth-tongued hypocrite!

Lew. But we have found him, and will requite him——Be cheerful, madam; [*To Mrs. Bev.*] and for the insults of this ruffian you shall have ample retribution.

Mrs. Bev. But not by violence—Remember, you have sworn it; I had been silent else.

Lew. You need not doubt me; I shall be cool as patience.

Mrs. Bev. See him to-morrow then.

Lew. And why not now? By Heaven, the veriest worm that crawls is made of braver spirit than this Stukely——Yet, for my promise, I will deal gently with him—I mean to watch his looks—From those, and from his answers to my charge, much may be learnt. Next I will to Bates, and sift him to the bottom: if I fail there, the gang is numerous, and for a bribe will each betray the other——Good night; I will lose no time. [*Exit.*

Mrs. Bev. These boisterous spirits, how they wound me! But reasoning is in vain. Come, Charlotte, we will to our usual watch. The night grows late.

Char. I am fearful of events; yet pleased—To-morrow may relieve us. [*Going.*

Enter JARVIS.

How now, good Jarvis?

Jar. I have heard ill news, madam.

Mrs. Bev. What news? Speak quickly.

Jar. Men are not what they seem. I fear me Mr. Stukely is dishonest.

Char. We know it, Jarvis. But what's your news?

Jar. That there's an action against my master, at his friend's suit.

Mrs. Bev. Oh, villain, villain! 'twas this he threatened, then! Run to that den of robbers, Wilson's—Your master may be there. Entreat him home, good Jarvis. Say I have business with him—But tell him not of Stukely—It may provoke him to revenge——Haste, haste, good Jarvis. [*Exit Jarvis.*

Char. This minister of hell! Oh, I could tear him piece-meal!——

Mrs. Bev. I am sick of such a world——Yet Heaven is just; and, in its own good time, will hurl destruction on such monsters. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to* STUKELY'S *lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY *and* BATES *meeting.*

Bates. Where have you been?

Stuke. Fooling my time away; playing my tricks, like a tame monkey, to entertain a woman.

—No matter where——I have been vexed and disappointed. Tell me of Beverley; how bore he his last shock?

Bates. Like one (so Dawson says) whose senses had been numb'd with misery. When all was lost, he fixed his eyes upon the ground, and stood some time, with folded arms, stupid and motionless; then snatching his sword, that hung against the wainscot, he sat him down, and, with a look of fixed attention, drew figures on the floor. At last, he started up, looked wild, and trembled; and, like a woman seized with her sex's fits, laughed out aloud, while the tears trickled down his face—so left the room.

Stuke. Why, this was madness.

Bates. The madness of despair.

Stuke. We must confine him then. A prison would do well. [*A knocking at the door.*] Hark! that knocking may be his. Go that way down. [*Exit Bates.*]—Who's there?

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. An enemy—an open and avowed one.

Stuke. Why am I thus broke in upon? This house is mine, sir; and should protect me from insult and ill-manners.

Lew. Guilt has no place of sanctuary; wherever found, it is virtue's lawful game. The fox's hold and tyger's den are no security against the hunter.

Stake. Your business, sir?

Lew. To tell you, that I know you——Why this confusion? That look of guilt and terror? Is Beverley awake; or has his wife told tales? The man, that dares like you, should have a soul to justify his deeds, and courage to confront accusers: not, with a coward's fear, to shrink beneath reproof.

Stuke. Who waits there?

[*Aloud, and in confusion.*

Lew. By Heaven, he dies that interrupts us. [*Shutting the door.*] You should have weighed your strength, sir; and then, instead of climbing to high fortune, the world had marked you for what you are, a little paltry villain.

Stuke. You think I fear you.

Lew. I know you fear me. This is to prove it. [*Pulls him by the sleeve.*] You wanted privacy—A lady's presence took up your attention—Now we are alone, sir. Why, what a wretch! [*Flings him from him.*] The vilest insect in creation will turn, when trampled on; yet has this thing undone a man—by cunning and mean arts undone him. But we have found you, sir; traced you through all your labyrinths. If you would save yourself, fall to confession: no mercy will be shewn else.

Stuke. First prove me what you think me—till then, your threatenings are in vain——And for this insult, vengeance may yet be mine.

Lew. Infamous coward! why, take it now then—[*Draws, and Stukely retires.*] Alas, I pity thee!——Yet that a wretch like this should overcome a Beverley! It fills me with astonishment!——A wretch, so mean of soul, that even desperation cannot animate him to look upon an enemy. You should not have thus soared, sir, unless, like others of your black profession, you had a sword to keep the fools in awe, your villainy had ruined.

Stuke. Villainy! It were best to curb this licence of your tongue; for know, sir, while there are laws, this outrage on my reputation will not be borne with.

Lew. Laws! Darest thou seek shelter from the laws, those laws, which thou and thy infernal crew live in the constant violation of? Talkest thou of reputation too, when, under friendship's sacred name, thou hast betrayed, robbed, and destroyed?

Stuke. Ay, rail at gaming; it is a rich topic, and affords noble declamation——Go, preach against it in the city: you will find a congregation in every tavern. If they should laugh at you, fly to my lord, and sermonize it there: he will thank you, and reform.

Lew. And will example sanctify a vice? No, wretch; the custom of my lord, or of the cit, that apes him, cannot excuse a breach of law, or make the gamester's calling reputable.

Stuke. Rail on, I say——But is this zeal for beggared Beverley? Is it for him, that I am treated thus? No; he and his wife might both have groaned in prison, had but the sister's fortune escaped the wreck, to have rewarded the disinterested love of honest Mr Lewson.

Lew. How I detest thee for the thought! But thou art lost to every human feeling. Yet let me tell thee, and may it wring thy heart, that though my friend is ruined by thy snares, thou hast, unknowingly, been kind to me.

Stuke. Have I? It was, indeed, unknowingly.

Lew. Thou hast assisted me in love; given me the merit, that I wanted; since, but for thee, my Charlotte had not known it was her dear self I sighed for, and not her fortune.

Stuke. Thank me, and take her then.

Lew. And, as a brother to poor Beverley, I will pursue the robber, that has stripped him; and snatch him from his gripe.

Stuke. Then know, imprudent man, he is within my gripe; and should my friendship for him be slandered once again, the hand, that has supplied him, shall fall and crush him.

Lew. Why, now there is a spirit in thee! This is indeed to be a villain! But I shall reach thee yet—Fly where thou wilt, my vengeance shall pursue thee—And Beverley shall yet be saved; be saved from thee, thou monster! nor owe his rescue to his wife's dishonour. [*Exit.*

Stuke. [*Pausing.*] Then ruin has enclosed me. Curse on my coward heart! I would be bravely villanous; but it is my nature to shrink at danger, and he has found me. Yet fear brings cau-

tion, and that security——More mischief must be done to hide the past——Look to yourself, officious Lewson—there may be danger stirring——How now, Bates?

Enter BATES.

Bates. What is the matter? It was Lewson, and not Beverley, that left you—I heard him loud—You seem alarmed too.

Stuke. Ay, and with reason——We are discovered.

Bates. I feared as much; and therefore cautioned you. But you were peremptory.

Stuke. Thus fools talk ever; spending their idle breath on what is past, and trembling at the future. We must be active. Beverley, at worst, is but suspicious; but Lewson's genius, and his hate to me, will lay all open. Means must be found to stop him.

Bates. What means?

Stuke. Dispatch him——Nay, start not——Desperate occasions call for desperate deeds——We live but by his death.

Bates. You cannot mean it?

Stuke. I do, by Heaven.

Bates. Good night, then. [*Going.*

Stuke. Stay. I must be heard, then answered. Perhaps the motion was too sudden; and human weakness starts at murder, though strong necessity compels it. I have thought long of this; and my first feelings were like yours; a foolish conscience awed me, which I soon conquered. The man, that would undo me, Nature cries out, undo. Brutes know their foes by instinct; and where superior force is given, they use it for destruction. Shall man do less? Lewson pursues us to our ruin; and shall we, with the means to crush him, fly from our hunter, or turn and tear him? It is folly even to hesitate.

Bates. He has obliged me, and I dare not.

Stuke. Why, live to shame then, to beggary and punishment. You would be privy to the deed, yet want the soul to act it. Nay, more, had my designs been levelled at his fortune, you had stepped in the foremost——And what is life without its comforts? Those you would rob him of, and, by a lingering death, add cruelty to murder. Henceforth, adieu to half-made villains—There is danger in them. What you have got is yours; keep it, and hide with it——I will deal my future bounty to those that merit it.

Bates. What is the reward?

Stuke. Equal division of our gains. I swear it, and will be just.

Bates. Think of the means then.

Stuke. He is gone to Beverley's——Wait for him in the street—It is a dark night, and fit for mischief. A dagger would be useful.

Bates. He sleeps no more

Stuke. Consider the reward. When the deed is done, I have farther business with you. Send Dawson to me.

Bates. Think it already done—and so, farewell. [*Exit.*

Stuke. Why, farewell Lewson, then; and farewell to my fears. This night secures me. I will wait the event within. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Changes to the street. Stage darkened.*

Enter BEVERLEY.

Bev. How like an out-cast do I wander? Loaded with every curse, that drives the soul to desperation—The midnight robber, as he walks his rounds, sees, by the glimmering lamp, my frantic looks, and dreads to meet me. Whither am I going? My home lies there; all that is dear on earth it holds too; yet are the gates of death more welcome to me—I will enter it no more—Who passes there? It is Lewson—He meets me in a gloomy hour; and memory tells me he has been meddling with my fame.

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. Beverley! Well met. I have been busy in your affairs.

Bev. So I have heard, sir; and now must thank you as I ought.

Lew. To-morrow I may deserve your thanks. Late as it is, I go to Bates. Discoveries are making that an arch-villain trembles at.

Bev. Discoveries are made, sir, that you shall tremble at. Where is this boasted spirit, this high demeanour, that was to call me to account? You say I have wronged my sister——Now say as much. But first be ready for defence, as I am for resentment. [*Draws.*

Lew. What mean you? I understand you not.

Bev. The coward's stale acquaintance! who, when he spreads foul calumny abroad, and dreads just vengeance on him, cries out, 'What mean you? I understand you not.'

Lew. Coward and calumny! Whence are those words? But I forgive, and pity you.

Bev. Your pity had been kinder to my fame. But you have traduced it; told a vile story to the public ear, that I have wronged my sister.

Lew. 'Tis false. Shew me the man, that dares accuse me.

Bev. I thought you brave, and of a soul superior to low malice; but I have found you, and will have vengeance. This is no place for argument.

Lew. Nor shall it be for violence. Imprudent man! who, in revenge for fancied injuries, would pierce the heart that loves him. But honest friendship acts from itself, unmoved by slander or ingratitude. The life you thirst for shall be employed to serve you.

Bev. 'Tis thus you would compound then——First, do a wrong beyond forgiveness, and, to redress it, load me with kindnesses unsolicited.—I'll not receive it. Your zeal is troublesome.

Lew. No matter. It shall be useful.

Bev. It will not be accepted.

Lew. It must. You know me not.

Bev. Yes, for the slanderer of my fame; who, under shew of friendship, arraigns me of injustice; buzzing in every ear foul breach of trust, and family dishonour.

Lew. Have I done this? Who told you so?

Bev. The world—'Tis talked of every where. It pleased you to add threats too. You were to call me to account—Why, do it now, then: I shall be proud of such an arbiter.

Lew. Put up your sword, and know me better. I never injured you. The base suggestion comes from Stukely: I see him and his aims.

Bev. What aims? I'll not conceal it; 'twas Stukely that accused you.

Lew. To rid him of an enemy—Perhaps of two—He fears discovery, and frames a tale of falsehood, to ground revenge and murder on.

Bev. I must have proof of this.

Lew. Wait till to-morrow, then.

Bev. I will.

Lew. Good-night——I go to serve you—Forget what is past, as I do; and cheer your family with smiles. To-morrow may confirm them, and make all happy. [*Exit.*

Bev. [*Pausing.*] How vile, and how absurd is man! His boasted honour is but another name for pride, which easier bears the consciousness of guilt, than the world's just reproofs. But 'tis the fashion of the times; and in defence of falsehood and false honour men die martyrs. I knew not that my nature was so bad.

[*Stands musing.*

Enter BATES, *and* JARVIS.

Jar. This way the noise was; and yonder's my poor master.

Bates. I heard him at high words with Lewson. The cause I know not.

Jar. I heard him too. Misfortunes vex him.

Bates. Go to him, and lead him home. But he comes this way——I will not be seen by him. [*Exit.*

Bev. [*Starting.*] What fellow's that? [*Seeing Jarvis.*] Art thou a murderer, friend? Come, lead the way; I have a hand as mischievous as thine; a heart as desperate too—Jarvis!—To bed, old man; the cold will chill thee.

Jar. Why are you wandering at this late hour? Your sword drawn too? For Heaven's sake, sheath it, sir—The sight distracts me.

Bev. Whose voice was that? [*Wildly.*]

Jar. 'Twas mine, sir. Let me intreat you to give the sword to me.

Bev. Ay, take it—quickly take it—Perhaps I am not so cursed, but Heaven may have sent thee at this moment to snatch me from perdition.

Jar. Then I am blessed.

Bev. Continue so, and leave me: my sorrows are contagious. No one is blessed that is near me.

Jar. I came to seek you, sir.

Bev. And now thou hast found me, leave me. My thoughts are wild, and will not be disturbed.

Jar. Such thoughts are best disturbed.

Bev. I tell thee that they will not. Who sent thee hither?

Jar. My weeping mistress.

Bev. Am I so meek a husband, then, that a commanding wife prescribes my hours, and sends to chide me for my absence!——Tell her I'll not return.

Jar. Those words would kill her.

Bev. Kill her! Would they not be kind, then? But she shall live to curse me—I have deserved it of her. Does she not hate me, Jarvis?

Jar. Alas, sir, forget your griefs, and let me lead you to her! The streets are dangerous.

Bev. Be wise, and leave me then. The night's black horrors are suited to my thoughts——These stones shall be my resting-place. [*Lies down.*] Here shall my soul brood o'er its miseries, till, with the fiends of hell, and guilty of the earth, I start and tremble at the morning's light.

Jar. For pity's sake, sir—Upon my knees, I beg you to quit this place, and these sad thoughts. Let patience, not despair, possess you—Rise, I beseech you———There is not a moment of your absence, that my poor mistress does not groan for.

Bev. Have I undone her, and is she still so kind? [*Starting up.*] It is too much—My brain cannot hold it—Oh, Jarvis, how desperate is that wretch's state, which only death or madness can relieve!

Jar. Appease his mind, good Heaven, and give him resignation! Alas, sir, could beings in the other world perceive the events of this, how would your parents' blessed spirits grieve for you even in Heaven! Let me conjure you, by their honoured memories; by the sweet innocence of your yet helpless child, and by the ceaseless sorrows of my poor mistress, to rouse your manhood, and struggle with these griefs.

Bev. Thou virtuous, good old man! thy tears and thy entreaties have reached my heart, through all its miseries.

Jar. Be but resigned, sir, and happiness may yet be yours.

Bev. Prithee be honest, and do not flatter misery.

Jar. I do not, sir. Hark! I hear voices—Come this way; we may reach home unnoticed.

Bev. Well, lead me then.—Unnoticed, didst thou say? Alas, I dread no looks but of those wretches I have made at home! O, had I listened to thy honest warnings, no earthly blessing had been wanting to me! I was so happy, that even a wish for more than I possessed, was arrogant presumption. But I have warred against the

power, that blessed me; and now am forced to the hell I merit. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Changes to* STUKELY'S *lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY *and* DAWSON.

Stuke. Come hither, Dawson: My limbs are on the rack, and my soul shivers in me, till this night's business be complete. Tell me thy thoughts; is Bates determined, or does he waver?

Daw. At first he seemed irresolute; wished the employment had been mine; and muttered curses on his coward hand, that trembled at the deed.

Stuke. And did he leave you so?

Daw. No; we walked together, and, sheltered by the darkness, saw Beverley and Lewson in warm debate. But soon they cooled, and then I left them to hasten hither; but not till it was resolved Lewson should die.

Stuke. Thy words have given me life. That quarrel, too, was fortunate; for, if my hopes deceive me not, it promises a grave to Beverley.

Daw. You misconceive me. Lewson and he were friends.

Stuke. But my prolific brain shall make them enemies. If Lewson falls, he falls by Beverley. An upright jury shall decree it. Ask me no questions; but do as I direct. This writ, [*Takes out a pocket-book.*] for some days past, I have treasured here till a convenient time called for its use. That time is come. Take it, and give it to an officer. It must be served this instant.

[*Gives a paper.*

Daw. On Beverley!

Stuke. Look at it. It is for the sums that I have lent him.

Daw. Must he to prison, then?

Stuke. I asked obedience, not replies. This night a jail must be his lodgings. It is probable he is not gone home yet. Wait at his door, and see it executed.

Daw. Upon a beggar?——He has no means of payment.

Stuke. Dull and insensible!—If Lewson dies, who was it killed him?——Why, he that was seen quarrelling with him: and I, that knew of Beverley's intents, arrested him in friendship—A little late, perhaps; but 'twas a virtuous act, and men will thank me for it. Now, sir, you understand me?

Daw. Most perfectly; and will about it.

Stuke. Haste, then; and when it is done, come back and tell me.

Daw. Till then, farewell. [*Exit.*

Stuke. Now, tell thy tale, fond wife! And, Lewson, if again thou canst insult me, I will kneel, and own thee for my master.

Not avarice now, but vengeance fires my breast,
And one short hour must make me cursed or blessed. [*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Continues.*

Enter STUKELY, BATES, *and* DAWSON.

Bates. POOR LEWSON!—But I told you enough last night. The thought of him is horrible to me.

Stuke. In the street, did you say? And no one near him?

Bates. By his own door; he was leading me to his house. I pretended business with him, and stabbed him to the heart, while he was reaching at the bell.

Stuke. And did he fall so suddenly?

Bates. The repetition pleases you, I see. I told you he fell without a groan.

Stuke. What heard you of him this morning?

Bates. That the watch found him in their rounds, and alarmed the servants. I mingled with the crowd just now, and saw him dead in his own house——The sight terrified me.

Stuke. Away with terrors, till his ghost rise and accuse us. We have no living enemy to fear, unless it is Beverley; and him we have lodged safe in prison.

Bates. Must he be murdered too?

Stuke. No; I have a scheme to make the law his murderer. At what hour did Lewson fall?

Bates. The clock struck twelve, as I turned to leave him. 'Twas a melancholy bell, I thought, tolling for his death.

Stuke. The time was lucky for us——Beverley was arrested at one, you say? [*To Dawson.*

Daw. Exactly.

Stuke. Good. We'll talk of this presently. The women were with him, I think?

Daw. And old Jarvis. I would have told you of them last night, but your thoughts were too busy.—It is well you have a heart of stone; the tale would melt it else.

Stuke. Out with it, then.

Daw. I traced him to his lodgings; and, pretending pity for his misfortunes, kept the door open, while the officers seized him. 'Twas a damned deed—but no matter——I followed my instructions.

Stuke. And what said he?

Daw. He upbraided me with treachery, called you a villain, acknowledged the sums you had lent him, and submitted to his fortune.

Stuke. And the women——

Daw. For a few minutes astonishment kept them silent. They looked wildly at one another, while the tears streamed down their cheeks. But rage and fury soon gave them words; and

then, in the very bitterness of despair, they cursed me, and the monster that had employed me.

Stuke. And you bore it with philosophy?

Daw. 'Till the scene changed, and then I melted. I ordered the officers to take away their prisoner. The women shrieked, and would have followed him; but we forbade them. It was then they fell upon their knees, the wife fainted, the sister raving, and both, with all the eloquence of misery, endeavouring to soften us. I never felt compassion till that moment; and had the officers been moved like me, we had left the business undone, and fled with curses on ourselves. But their hearts were steeled by custom. The tears of beauty, and the pangs of affection, were beneath their pity. They tore him from their arms, and lodged him in prison, with only Jarvis to comfort him.

Stuke. There let him lie, till we have farther business with him. And for you, sir, let me hear no more of your compassion——A fellow, nursed in villany, and employed from childhood in the business of hell, should have no dealings with compassion.

Daw. Say you so, sir?—You should have named the devil that tempted me——

Stuke. It is false. I found you a villain, and therefore employed you:—But no more of this; we have embarked too far in mischief to recede. Lewson is dead, and we are all principals in his murder. Think of that.—There is time enough for pity, when ourselves are out of danger. Beverley still lives, though in a gaol. His ruin will sit heavy on him; and discoveries may be made to undo us all. Something must be done, and speedily. You saw him quarrelling with Lewson in the street last night? [*To Bates.*

Bates. I did; his steward, Jarvis, saw him too.

Stuke. And shall attest it. Here is matter to work upon. An unwilling evidence carries weight with him. Something of my design I have hinted to you before. Beverley must be the author of this murder; and we the parties to convict him.—But how to proceed will require time and thought. Come along with me; the room within is fitted for privacy.—But no compassion, sir [*To Dawson.*]—We want leisure for it.——This way. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to* BEVERLEY'S *lodgings.*

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Mrs. Bev. No news of Lewson yet?

Char. None. He went out early, and knows not what has happened.

Mrs Bev. The clock strikes eight——I will wait no longer.

Char. Stay but till Jarvis comes. He has sent twice to stop us till we see him.

Mrs Bev. I have no life in this separation—Oh, what a night was last night! I would not pass another such to purchase worlds by it—My poor Beverley too! What must he have felt?—The very thought distracts me—To have him torn at midnight from me! A loathsome prison his habitation! A cold damp room his lodging! The bleak winds, perhaps, blowing upon his pillow! No fond wife to lull him to his rest! and no reflections but to wound and tear him! 'Tis too horrible—I wanted love for him, or they had not forced him from me.——They should have parted soul and body first—I was too tame.

Char. You must not talk so.——All that we could we did; and Jarvis did the rest—The faithful creature will give him comfort. Why does he delay coming?

Mrs Bev. And there is another fear. His poor master may be claiming the last kind office from him—His heart, perhaps, is breaking.

Char. See, where he comes—His looks are cheerful too.

Enter JARVIS.

Mrs Bev. Are tears, then, cheerful? Alas, he weeps! Speak to him, Charlotte——I have no tongue to ask him questions.

Char. How does your master, Jarvis?

Jar. I am old and foolish, madam; and tears will come before my words.—But do not you weep [*To Mrs Bev.*]; I have a tale of joy for you.

Mrs Bev. What tale?—Say but he is well, and I have joy enough.

Jar. His mind, too, shall be well—all shall be well—I have news for him, that will make his poor heart bound again.——Fie upon old age—How childish it makes me! I have a tale of joy for you, and my tears drown it.

Char. Shed them in showers, then, and make haste to tell it.

Mrs Bev. What is it, Jarvis?

Jar. Yet why should I rejoice, when a good man dies? Your uncle, madam, died yesterday.

Mrs Bev. My uncle!——Oh, Heavens!

Char. How heard you of his death?

Jar. His steward came express, madam—I met him in the street, enquiring for your lodgings.—I should not rejoice, perhaps; but he was old, and my poor master a prisoner. Now he shall live again. Oh, it is a brave fortune!—and it was death to me to see him a prisoner.

Char. Where left you the steward?

Jar. I would not bring him hither, to be a witness of your distresses; and besides, I wanted, once before I die, to be the messenger of joy to you. My good master will be a man again!

Mrs Bev. Haste, haste then; and let us fly to him! We are delaying our own happiness.

Jar. I had forgot a coach, madam, and Lucy has ordered one.

Mrs Bev. Where was the need of that? The news has given me wings.

Char. I have no joy, till my poor brother share it with me. How did he pass the night, Jarvis?

Jar. Why now, madam, I can tell you. Like a man dreaming of death and horrors. When they led him to his cell—for it was a poor apartment for my master—he flung himself upon a wretched bed, and lay speechless till day-break. A sigh, now and then, and a few tears, that followed these sighs, were all that told me he was alive. I spoke to him, but he would not hear me; and when I persisted, he raised his hand at me, and knit his brow so—I thought he would have struck me.

Mrs Bev. Oh, miserable!—but what said he, Jarvis? Or was he silent all night?

Jar. At day-break he started from the bed, and, looking wildly at me, asked who I was. I told him, and bid him be of comfort.—Begone, old wretch, says he—I have sworn never to know comfort.——My wife! my child! my sister! I have undone them all, and will know no comfort. Then falling upon his knees, he imprecated curses upon himself!

Mrs Bev. This is too horrible!—But you did not leave him so?

Char. No, I am sure he did not.

Jar. I had not the heart, madam. By degrees I brought him to himself. A shower of tears came to his relief; and he called me his kindest friend, and begged forgiveness of me like a child. My heart throbbed so, I could not speak to him. He turned from me for a minute or two, and, suppressing a few bitter sighs, enquired after his wretched family.—Wretched was his word, madam—Asked how you bore the misery of last night—If you had the goodness to see him in prison: and then begged me to hasten to you. I told him he must be more himself first.—He promised me he would; and, bating a few sudden intervals, he became composed and easy—And then I left him; but not without an attendant—a servant in the prison, whom I hired to wait upon him.—It is an hour since we parted.——I was prevented, in my haste, to be the messenger of joy to you.

Mrs Bev. What a tale is this? But we have staid too long—a coach is needless.

Char. Hark! I hear one at the door.

Jar. And Lucy comes to tell us——we will away this moment.

Mrs Bev. To comfort him, or die with him. [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Changes to* STUKELY'S *Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY, BATES, *and* DAWSON.

Stuke. Here's presumptive evidence at least—or if we want more, why we must swear more. But all unwillingly—we gain credit by reluctance. I have told you how to proceed. Beverley must die—we hunt him in view now, and must not slacken in the chace. 'Tis either death for him, or shame and punishment for us. Think of that, and remember your instructions—you, Bates, must to the prison immediately. I would be there but a few minutes before you; and you, Dawson, must follow in a few minutes after. So here we divide—but answer me; are you resolved upon this business like men?

Bates. Like villains, rather—but you may depend upon us.

Stuke. Like what we are, then—you make no answer, Dawson—compassion, I suppose, has seized you.

Daw. No; I have disclaimed it—my answer is Bates's—you may depend upon me.

Stuke. Consider the reward! Riches and security! I have sworn to divide with you to the last shilling—so here we separate, till we meet in prison—remember your instructions, and be men. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.—*Changes to a prison.* BEVERLEY *is discovered sitting. After a short pause, he starts up, and comes forward.*

Bev. Why, there's an end, then; I have judged deliberately, and the result is death. How the self-murderer's account may stand, I know not. But this I know—the load of hateful life oppresses me too much—the horrors of my soul are more than I can bear—[*Offers to kneel.*] Father of mercy! I cannot pray—despair has laid his iron hand upon me, and sealed me for perdition—conscience! conscience! thy clamours are too loud—here's that shall silence thee. [*Takes a phial out of his pocket, and looks at it.*] Thou art most friendly to the miserable. Come, then, thou cordial for sick minds—come to my heart. [*Drinks.*] Oh, that the grave would bury memory as well as body! For if the soul sees and feels the sufferings of those dear ones it leaves behind, the Everlasting has no vengeance to torment it deeper—I will think no more of it—reflection comes too late—once there was a time for it—but now 'tis past. Who's there?

Enter JARVIS.

Jar. One, that hoped to see you with better looks—why do you turn so from me? I have brought comfort with me. And see, who comes to give it welcome!

Bev. My wife and sister! Why, 'tis but one pang more, then, and farewell world. [*Aside.*

Enter Mrs BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Mrs Bev. Where is he? [*Runs and embraces him.*] Oh, I have him! I have him! And now they shall never part us more—I have news, love, to make you happy for ever—but do not look coldly on me!

Char. How is it, brother?

Mrs Bev. Alas! he hears us not—speak to me, love. I have no heart to see you thus.

Bev. Nor I to bear the sense of so much shame—this is a sad place!

Mrs Bev. We came to take you from it. To tell you the world goes well again. That Providence has seen our sorrows, and sent the means to help them—your uncle died yesterday.

Bev. My uncle! No, do not say so! Oh, I am sick at heart!

Mrs Bev. Indeed! I meant to bring you comfort.

Bev. Tell me he lives then—if you would bring me comfort, tell me he lives.

Mrs Bev. And if I did—I have no power to raise the dead—he died yesterday.

Bev. And I am heir to him?

Jar. To his whole estate, sir—but bear it patiently—pray bear it patiently.

Bev. Well, well—[*Pausing.*] Why, fame says I am rich, then?

Mrs Bev. And truly so—why do you look so wildly?

Bev. Do I? The news was unexpected. But has he left me all?

Jar. All, all, sir—he could not leave it from you.

Bev. I am sorry for it.

Char. Sorry! Why sorry?

Bev. Your uncle's dead, Charlotte.

Char. Peace be with his soul then—is it so terrible, that an old man should die?

Bev. He should have been immortal.

Mrs Bev. Heaven knows I wished not for his death. 'Twas the will of providence, that he should die—why are you disturbed so?

Bev. Has death no terrors in it?

Mrs Bev. Not an old man's death. Yet if it troubles you, I wish him living.

Bev. And I, with all my heart.

Char. Why, what's the matter!

Bev. Nothing—how heard you of his death?

Mrs Bev. His steward came express. Would I had never known it!

Bev. Or had heard it one day sooner—for I have a tale to tell, shall turn you into stone; or, if the power of speech remain, you shall kneel down and curse me.

Mrs. Bev. Alas! what tale is this? And why are we to curse you—I will bless you for ever.

Bev. No; I have deserved no blessings. The world holds not such another wretch. All this large fortune, this second bounty of Heaven, that might have healed our sorrows, and satisfied our utmost hopes, in a cursed hour I sold last night.

Char. Sold! How sold?

Mrs. Bev. Impossible!—It cannot be!

Bev. That devil Stukely, with all hell to aid him, tempted me to the deed. To pay false debts of honour, and to redeem past errors, I sold the reversion——Sold it for a scanty sum, and lost it among villains.

Char. Why, farewell all then.

Bev. Liberty and life—Come, kneel and curse me!

Mrs. Bev. Then hear me, Heaven! [*Kneels.*] Look down with mercy on his sorrows! Give softness to his looks, and quiet to his heart! Take from his memory the sense of what is past, and cure him of despair! On me! on me! if misery must be the lot of either, multiply misfortunes! I will bear them patiently, so he is happy! These hands shall toil for his support! These eyes be lifted up for hourly blessings on him! And every duty of a fond and faithful wife be doubly done to cheer and comfort him!—So hear me! So reward me! [*Rises.*

Bev. I would kneel too, but that offended Heaven would turn my prayers into curses. What have I to ask for! I, who have shook hands with hope? Is it for length of days that I should kneel! No; my time is limited. Or is it for this world's blessings upon you and yours? To pour out my heart in wishes for a ruined wife, a child, and sister? Oh, no! for I have done a deed to make life horrible to you——

Mrs Bev. Why horrible? Is poverty so horrible?—The real wants of life are few. A little industry will supply them all—And cheerfulness will follow—It is the privilege of honest industry, and we will enjoy it fully.

Bev. Never, never—Oh, I have told you but in part. The irrevocable deed is done.

Mrs Bev. What deed!—And why do you look so at me!

Bev. A deed, that dooms my soul to vengeance—That seals your misery here, and mine hereafter.

Mrs Bev. No, no: you have a heart too good for it—Alas! he raves, Charlotte—His looks too terrify me—Speak comfort to him—He can have done no deed of wickedness.

Char. And yet I fear the worst——What is it, brother?

Bev. A deed of horror.

Jar. Ask him no questions, madam—This last misfortune has hurt his brain. A little time will give him patience.

Enter STUKELY.

Bev. Why is this villain here?

Stuke. To give you liberty and safety. There, madam, is his discharge. [*Giving a paper to Mrs Beverly.*] Let him fly this moment. The arrest last night was meant in friendship; but came too late.

Char. What mean you, sir?

Stuke. The arrest was too late, I say; I would have kept his hands from blood, but was too late.

Mrs Bev. His hands from blood!—Whose blood?—Oh, wretch! wretch!

Stuke. From Lewson's blood.

Char. No, villain! Yet what of Lewson? Speak quickly.

Stuke. You are ignorant then! I thought I heard the murderer at confession.

Char. What murderer?—And who is murdered? Not Lewson?—Say he lives, and I'll kneel and worship you.

Stuke. In pity, so I would; but that the tongues of all cry murder. I came in pity, not in malice; to save the brother, not kill the sister. Your Lewson's dead!

Char. O horrible! Why, who has killed him? And yet it cannot be. What crime had he committed that he should die? Villain! he lives! he lives! and shall revenge these pangs!

Mrs Bev. Patience, sweet Charlotte!

Char. O, 'tis too much for patience!

Mrs Bev. He comes in pity, he says! O, execrable villain! The friend is killed, then, and this the murderer?

Bev. Silence, I charge you!——Proceed, sir.

Stuke. No. Justice may stop the tale—and here is an evidence.

Enter BATES.

Bates. The news, I see, has reached you. But take comfort, madam. [*To Char.*] There is one without inquiring for you. Go to him, and lose no time.

Char. O misery! misery! [*Exit.*

Mrs Bev. Follow her, Jarvis. If it be true that Lewson's dead, her grief may kill her.

Bates. Jarvis must stay here, madam. I have some questions for him.

Stuke. Rather let him fly. His evidence may crush his master.

Bev. Why, ay; this looks like management.

Bates. He found you quarrelling with Lewson in the streets last night. [*To Bev.*

Mrs Bev. No; I am sure he did not.

Jar. Or if I did——

Mrs Bev. It is false, old man—They had no quarrel; there was no cause for quarrel.

Bev. Let him proceed, I say——Oh! I am sick! sick!———Reach a chair. [*He sits down.*

Mrs Bev. You droop and tremble, love.——Your eyes are fixed too———Yet you are innocent. If Lewson's dead, you killed him not.

Enter DAWSON.

Stuke. Who sent for Dawson?

Bates. 'Twas I—We have a witness too you little think of—Without there!

Stuke. What witness?

Bates. A right one. Look at him.

Enter LEWSON *and* CHARLOTTE.

Stuke. Lewson! O villains! villains! [*To Bates and Dowson.*

Mrs Bev. Risen from the dead! Why, this is unexpected happiness?

Char. Or is it his ghost? [*To Stukely.*] That sight would please you, sir,

Jar. What riddle is this?

Bev. Be quick and tell it—My minutes are but few.

Mrs Bev. Alas! why so? You shall live long and happily.

Lew. While shame and punishment shall rack that viper. [*Pointing to Stukely.*] The tale is short—I was too busy in his secrets, and therefore doomed to die. Bates, to prevent the murder, undertook it—I kept aloof to give it credit.———

Char. And give me pangs unutterable.

Lew. I felt them all, and would have told you—But vengeance wanted ripening. The villain's scheme was but half executed. The arrest by Dawson followed the supposed murder——And now, depending on his once wicked associates, he comes to fix the guilt on Beverley.

Mrs Bev. Oh execrable wretch!

Bates. Dawson and I are witnesses of this.

Lew. And of a thousand frauds. His fortune ruined by sharpers and false dice; and Stukely sole contriver and possessor of all.

Daw. Had he but stopped on this side murder, we had been villains still.

Mrs Bev. Thus Heaven turns evil into good; and, by permitting sin, warns men to virtue.

Lew. Yet punishes the instrument. So shall our laws; though not with death. But death were mercy. Shame, beggary, and imprisonment, unpitied misery, the stings of conscience, and the curses of mankind shall make life hateful to him—till at last his own hand end him—How does my friend? [*To Bev.*

Bev. Why well. Who is he, that asks me?

Mrs. Bev. 'Tis Lewson, love—Why do you look so at him?

Bev. They told me he was murdered. [*Wildly.*

Mrs. Bev. Ay; but he lives to save us.

Bev. Lend me your hand—The room turns round.

Mrs. Bev. O Heaven!

Lew. This villain here disturbs him. Remove him from his sight—And for your lives see that you guard him. [*Stukely is taken off by Dawson and Bates.*] How is it, sir?

Bev. 'Tis here—and here. [*Pointing to his head and heart.*] And now it tears me!

Mrs. Bev. You feel convulsed too—What is it disturbs you?

Lew. This sudden turn of joy, perhaps—He wants rest too—Last night was dreadful to him. His brain is giddy.

Char. Ay, never to be cured—Why, brother!—O! I fear! I fear!

Mrs. Bev. Preserve him, Heaven!—My love! my life! look at me!—How his eyes flame!

Bev. A furnace rages in this heart—I have been too hasty.

Mrs Bev. Indeed!—O me! O me!—Help, Jarvis! Fly, fly for help! Your master dies else.—Weep not, but fly! [*Exit Jarvis.*] What is this hasty deed?—Yet do not answer me—My fears have guessed.

Bev. Call back the messenger—'Tis not in medicine's power to help me.

Mrs Bev. Is it then so?

Bev. Down, restless flames!—[*Laying his hand*

on his heart.] down to your native hell—There you shall rack me—O! for a pause from pain!

Mrs. Bev. Help, Charlotte! Support him, sir! [*To Lewson.*] This is a killing sight!

Bev. That pang was well—It has numbed my senses.—Where's my wife?—Can you forgive me, love?

Mrs Bev. Alas! for what?

Bev. [*Starting again.*] And there's another pang—Now all is quiet—Will you forgive me?

Mrs Bev. I will—tell me for what?

Bev. For meanly dying.

Mrs Bev. No——do not say it.

Bev. As truly as my soul must answer it.——Had Jarvis staid this morning, all had been well. But pressed by shame—pent in a prison—tormented with my pangs for you—driven to despair and madness—I took the advantage of his absence, corrupted the poor wretch he left to guard me, and—swallowed poison.

Mrs Bev. O fatal deed!

Char. Dreadful and cruel!

Bev. Ay, most accursed—And now I go to my account. This rest from pain brings death; yet 'tis Heaven's kindness to me. I wished for ease, a moment's ease, that cool repentance and contrition might soften vengeance.—Bend me, and let me kneel. [*They lift him from his chair, and support him on his knees.*] I'll pray for you too. Thou power, that madest me, hear me! If for a life of frailty, and this too hasty deed of death, thy justice dooms me, here I acquit the sentence. But if enthroned in mercy where thou sittest, thy pity has beheld me, send me a gleam of hope; that, in these last and bitter moments, my soul may taste of comfort! and for these mourners here, O! let their lives be peaceful, and their deaths happy!——Now raise me.

[*They lift him to the chair.*

Mrs Bev. Restore him, Heaven! Stretch forth thy arm omnipotent, and snatch him from the grave!—O save him! save him!

Bev. Alas! that prayer is fruitless. Already death has seized me—Yet Heaven is gracious—I asked for hope, as the bright presage of forgiveness, and like a light, blazing through darkness, it came and cheered me—It was all I lived for, and now I die.

Mrs Bev. Not yet!—Not yet!—Stay but a little, and I will die too.

Bev. No; live, I charge you. We have a little one. Though I have left him, you will not leave him. To Lewson's kindness I bequeath him. Is not this Charlotte? We have lived in love, though I have wronged you. Can you forgive me, Charlotte?

Char. Forgive you! O my poor brother!

Bev. Lend me your hand, love——So—raise me——No——it will not be——My life is finished——O! for a few short moments, to tell you how my heart bleeds for you—That even now, thus dying as I am, dubious and fearful of hereafter, my bosom pang is for your miseries—support her, Heaven!—And now I go——O, mercy! mercy! [*Dies.*

Lew. Then all is over——How is it, madam?——My poor Charlotte too!

Enter JARVIS.

Jar. How does my master, madam? Here is help at hand——Am I too late then?

[*Seeing Beverley.*

Char. Tears! tears! why fall you not——O wretched sister!——Speak to her, Lewson——Her grief is speechless.

Lew. Remove her from this sight—Go to her, Jarvis—Lead and support her. Sorrow like hers forbids complaint—Words are for lighter griefs—Some ministering angel bring her peace! [*Jarvis and Charlotte lead her off.*] And thou, poor breathless corpse, may thy departed soul have found the rest it prayed for! Save but one error, and this last fatal deed, thy life was lovely. Let frailer minds take warning; and from example learn, that want of prudence is want of virtue.

Follies, if uncontrouled, of every kind,
Grow into passions, and subdue the mind;
With sense and reason hold superior strife,
And conquer honour, nature, fame, and life.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

BOADICEA.

BY

GLOVER.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

DUMNORIX, *chief of the Trinobantians.*
TENANTIUS, EBRANCUS, } *officers under Dumnorix.*
FLAMINIUS, ENOBARBUS, } *two captive Romans.*

WOMEN.

BOADICEA, *queen of the Icenians.*
VENUSIA, *wife of Dumnorix.*

Roman Ambassador, Icenians, and Trinobantians.

Scene—The British Camp before the Tent of Dumnorix.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter BOADICEA, DUMNORIX, *Icenians, Trinobantians, and Roman Ambassador.*

Rom. Am. SUETONIUS, leader of the Roman arms,
With gentlest greetings to the Icenian queen,
And Dumnorix, the Trinobantian chief,
Sends health, and proffers friendship. Let the wrongs,
The mutual wrongs, sustained by Rome and Britain——

Boad. May stern Andate, war's victorious goddess,
Again resign me to your impious rage,
If e'er I blot my sufferings from remembrance;
If e'er relenting mercy cool my vengeance,
Till I have driven you to your utmost shores,
And cast your legions on the crimsoned beach!
Your costly dwellings shall be sunk in ashes:
Your fields be ravaged; your aspiring bulwarks
O'erturned, and levelled to the meanest shrub;
Your gaping matrons, and your children's blood,
With mingled streams, shall dye the British sword;
Your captive warriors, victims at our altars,
Shall crowd each temple's spacious round with death:
Else may each power, to whom the Druids bend,
Annul my hopes of conquest and revenge!

Dum. [*To the Ambassador.*] You come to offer terms. Stand forth and answer.
Did not Prasutagus, her dying lord,
On your insatiate emperor bestow
Half of his rich possessions, vainly deeming
The rest might pass unpillaged to his children?
What did ye then, ye savage sons of rapine?
You seized the whole inheritance by force;
Laid waste our cities; with the servile scourge
Disgraced a royal matron; you deflowered
Her spotless daughters, stole our noblest youth,
To serve your pride and luxury in Rome;
Our priests you butchered, and our hoary elders;
Profaned our altars, our religious groves,
And the base image of your Cæsar thrust
Among the gods of Britain; and, by Heaven!
Do you repair to these victorious tents
With proffered peace and friendship?

Rom. Am. Yes, to treat,
As faith, benevolence, and justice dictate.

Dum. How shall we treat with those, whose impious hands
Have rent the sacred bands of mutual trust?
How shall we treat with those, whose stony hearts
Compassion cannot melt, nor shame controul,

Nor justice awe, nor piety restrain,
Nor kindness win, nor gratitude can bind?
Rom. Am. Thou art a stranger to our general's virtues.
No pillager, like Catus, but a soldier,
To calm and sober discipline inured;
He would redress, not widen, your complaints.
Dum. Can he restore the violated maid
To her untainted purity and fame?
Can he persuade inexorable death
To yield our slaughtered elders from the grave?
No, nor by soothing tales elude our vengeance.
Rom. Am. Yet hear us calmly, ere from yonder hills
You call the legions of imperial Rome,
And wake her eagles, which would sleep in peace.
Boad. Begone, and bear defiance to your legions.
Tell them, I come; that Boadicea comes,
Fierce with her wrongs, and terrible in vengeance,
To roll her chariot o'er their firmest ranks,
To mix their soaring eagles with the dust,
And spurn their pride beneath her horses' hoofs.
Rom. Am. Then be prepared for war.
Boad. We are prepared.
Come from your hills, ye fugitive remains
Of shattered cohorts, by their fear preserved.
The embattled nations of our peopled isle,
Yet fresh from seventy thousand slaughtered Romans,
Shall add yon refuse to the purpled heap.
And yet amid triumphant desolation,
Though flames each Roman colony devour,
Though each distracted matron view her infant
Grasp with its tender hands the piercing spear;
Though your grey fathers to the falchion's edge
Each feeble head surrender—my revenge
Will pine unsated, and my greatness want
Redress proportioned to a queen's disgrace.
Dum. Go, and report this answer to Suetonius:
Too long have parents' sighs, the cries of orphans,
And tears of widows, signalized your sway,
Since your ambitious Julius first advanced
His murderous standard on our peaceful shores.
At length, unfettered from his parent sloth,
The British genius lifts his ponderous hands,
To hurl, with ruin, his collected wrath,
For all the wrongs a century hath borne,
In one black period, on the Roman race.
Rom. Am. Yet, ere we part, your price of ransom name
For the two captive Romans.
Boad. Not the wealth,
Which loads the palaces of sumptuous Rome,
Shall bribe my fury. Hence, and tell your legions,
The hungry ravens, which inhabit round
The chalky cliffs of Albion, shall assemble
To feast upon the limbs of these, your captains,
Shall riot in the gore of Roman chiefs,
These masters of the world!—Produce the prisoners. [*To an Icenian.*

Enter ENOBARBUS *and* FLAMINIUS, *in chains.*

Boad. Stay, if thou wilt, and see our victims fall. [*To the Ambassador.*
Enob. [*To Boad.*] Dart not on me thy fiery eyes, barbarian!
Vain are thy efforts to dismay a Roman.
Life is become unworthy of my care;
And these vile limbs, by galling chains dishonoured,
I give most freely to the wolves and thee!
Rom. Am. Mistaken queen, the Romans do not want
These instigations, nor thy proud defiance,
To meet your numbers in the vale below.
Enob. [*To the Ambas.*] Then, wherefore dost thou linger here in vain?
Commend us to Suetonius; bid him straight
Arrange his conquering legions in the field,
There teach these rash barbarians to repent
Of their disdain, and wish for peace too late.
Rom. Am. [*To the prisoners.*] Yes, to Suetonius, and the Roman camp,
These heavy commendations will we bear:
That, for two gallant countrymen, our love
And indignation, at their fate, may sharpen
Each weapon's point, and strengthen every nerve,
Till humbled Britain have appeased their shades.
[*Exit.*
Enob. Come, let us know our fate.
Boad. Prepare for death.
Enob. Then cease to loiter, savage.
Dum. [*To Enob.*] Now, by Heaven,
Wert thou no Roman, I could save and love thee.
That dauntless spirit, in another breast,
And in a blameless cause, were truly noble,
But shews, in thee, the murderer and ruffian.
Enob. Thy hate or favour are alike to me.
Flam. [*To Dum.*] May I demand, illustrious Trinobantian,
Why must we fall, because uncertain war
Hath made us captives?
Dum. If, in open battle,
With generous valour to have faced our arms,
Were all our charge against thee, thou mightst rest,
Secure of life; but leading thee to die
Is execution on a general robber.
Enob. [*To Flam.*] And dost thou meanly sue to these barbarians?
Flam. [*To Dum.*] Though our rapacious countrymen have drawn
Your just resentment, we are guiltless both.
Boad. [*To Flam.*] So are ten thousand infants, whom the name,
The single name, of Roman shall condemn,
Like thee, to perish by the unsparing sword.
Flam. Yet more than guiltless, we may plead desert
With Boadicea.
Boad. Insolent pretension!
A Roman plead desert with Boadicea!

This shall enlarge the portion of thy sufferings;
For this, not only shall thy blood embrue
Andate's shrine, but torture shall be added,
And fury wanton in thy various pains.
Enob. [*To Boad.*] Produce thy tortures; them and thee we scorn.
Ten. Fall back with reverence, Trinobantian soldiers!
See who advances from your general's tent.

Enter VENUSIA.

Ven. Victorious sister, may the unresisting labour
Of fortune weave new honours to adorn thee,
And Dumnorix, thy colleague, and my lord.
But if, amid these warlike consultations,
Ere yet the ordered pomp of battle moves,
A supplicating sound may reach thy ear,
Stoop from thy glory to an act of mercy.
Thy doom pronounced on these unhappy captives——
Boad. Ha!
Ven. Their deservings, and thy daughter's prayer,
Mixed with my own compassion, from the tent
Have called me forth, a suitor to thy pity,
That thou wouldst hear and spare them.
Boad. Spare these captives!
Dum. Why this request, Venusia?
Ven. Give them hearing:
They can unfold a story, which demands
Your whole attention.
Dum. Let us hear. Proceed. [*To Flam.*
Flam. The Romans' late injustice we abhorred,
Nor joined the band of spoilers. In that season,
We chanced one day to wander through the forest,
Which parts our confines from the Icenian land.
We found a beauteous virgin in our way.
Boad. Wretch, dost thou hope to barter with our sister
For thy base life?
Flam. I fear not death, oh, queen!
But dread dishonour, even among my foes.
Enob. Death is thy terror; reason else would teach thee,
No gratitude with cruelty can dwell.
Flam. Deep in that wood we met the lovely maid,
Chased by a brutal soldier. At our threats
He soon retreated. To our home we led her,
From insult guarded, sent her back with honour:
Nor was she less than Boadicea's daughter.
Ven. Now, dearest sister, whose successful standard
Not valour more than equity upholds;
And thou, my husband, who dost rise in arms,
Oppressive deeds in others to chastise,
From your own guiding justice will you stray,
And blend deservers with the herd of guilt?
Dum. And are you Romans? Yes, we will, Venusia,
Repay their worthy deed. Strike off their fetters.
Boad. What do I hear! A British chief's command!
Who'er unchains a Roman, on mankind
Lets loose oppression, insolence, and rapine,
Sets treason, falsehood, vice, and murder free!
Ven. Yet these preserved thy Emmeline from shame.
Boad. Not less the victim of eternal shame
Was she conducted to their hateful mansion.
To guard her honour, and be less than ruffians,
Had been repugnant to their name and race;
But fear of me compelled them to relieve her.
Then shall two Romans, nursed in fraud and falsehood,
From childhood trained to each flagitious deed,
By coloured pleas to shun the fate they merit,
Here find regard against the thousand mouths
Of Boadicea's sufferings? No, this moment
Shall they expire in torture.
Ven. Yet reflect;
Of all the paths, which lead to human bliss,
The most secure and grateful to our steps
With mercy and humanity is marked.
The sweet-tongued rumour of a gracious deed
Can charm from hostile hands the uplifted blade,
The gall of anger into milk transform,
And dress the power of enmity in smiles.
Boad. Still dost thou dare, Venusia——
Dum. Gently, sister:
And, trust me, these resemble virtuous men.
Boad. Was I not virtuous, whom the Romans lashed?
Were not my violated children virtuous?
Bear them this instant to the fiercest rack;
And, while their trembling limbs are strained with torture,
While, through the cruel agony of pain,
The bloody drops bedew their shivering cheeks,
Tell them how gentle are the pangs they feel,
To those the soul of Boadicea proved,
When Roman rage her naked limbs exposed,
And marked her flesh with ever-during shame!
Dum. [*To the Britons.*] Withhold your hand.
Boad. What means the Trinobantian?
Dum. To save thy benefactors, and proclaim,
Whate'er by valour we extort from fortune,
We yet deserve by justice.
Boad. To contend
With Boadicea, and protect her foes,
Did she awaken thy ignoble sloth,
Which else, without resentment of thy wrongs,
Had slept obscure at home?
Dum. Forbear; be calm.
Boad. Yes, under bondage thou hadst tamely bowed,
Had not I fired thy slow, inactive soul.
Dum. Not with unbridled passion, I confess,
I wield the sword and mount the warlike car.
With careful eyes I viewed our suffering isle,
And meditated calmly to avenge her.

Unmoved by rage, my soul maintains her purpose
Through one unaltered course; and oft before
As I have guided thy unruly spirit,
Against its wildness will I now protect thee,
And from a base, inhuman action save thee.
Boad. Thy boasted calmness is the child of fear;
Thou tremblest to exasperate the foe.
Well was it, Britons, in our former conquests,
That I presided o'er the scene of slaughter;
Else had those thousands of the Roman youth,
Whose bodies lie extended on our fields,
Stood at this hour a threatening host against you.
Come, then, ye warriors! follow your conductress,
And drag these slaves to death.
Dum. They will not move,
Fixed with amazement at thy matchless frenzy.
Do thou revere these warriors, who with scorn
Observe thy folly.
Ven. Husband, sister, hear!
Oh, if my humbled voice, my prostrate limbs,
If tears and sighs of anguish may atone
For this pernicious discord I have raised——
Boad. [*To Ven.*] Hence with thy despicable sighs and tears! [*To Dum.*]
And thou, presumptuous, what invidious power,
Foe to thy safety, animates thy pride
Still to contend with Boadicea's wrath?
Dum. No, by Andate, I contend not with thee.
At this important season, when the soldier
Thirsts for the conflict, it would ill become me
To trifle here in discord with a woman.
Nay, do not swell that haughty breast in vain:
When once the sacred evidence of justice
Illuminates my bosom, on a rock,
Which neither tears can soften, nor the gusts
Of passion move, my resolution stands.
Boad. Now Heaven fulfil my curses on thy head!
May every purpose of thy soul be frustrate,
May infamy and ruin overtake thee,
May base captivity and chains o'erwhelm thee,
May shameful crimson from thy shoulders start,
Like mine, dishonoured with a servile scourge!
With pain all shivering, and thy flesh contracting,
Low may'st thou crouch beneath the expected stroke,
Even from the hands thou savest!
Tenan. Alas, great princess!
Divert this wrath against the impending foe,
Whose formidable ranks will soon descend
From yonder hill.
Boad. [*To the Britons.*] Ungrateful and perfidious!
Now would I draw my spirit from your camp,
Leave you with them defenceless and exposed;
Then should your shattered chariots be o'erthrown,
Your javelins broken, and in hasty flight
Far from your trembling hands the buckler cast,
Did not the insatiate thirst, which burns my soul
To empty every vein of Roman blood,
Protect you, traitors, from my indignation.
But, by the ensanguined altars of Andate,
Thou, Dumnorix, be sure, shalt rue this day;
For thou, henceforward, art to me a Roman.
[*Exit.*
Ven. Oh, Dumnorix!
Dum. Let not this frantic woman
Grieve thy mild nature—Romans, cease to fear;
These are my tents: retire in safety thither.
[*Exeunt Flam. and Enob.*
Do thou go forth this instant and command
[*To Tenan.*
Each ardent youth to gird his falchion round him,
His ponderous spear to loosen from the turf,
And brace the target firmly on his arm.
His car let every charioteer prepare,
His warlike seat each combatant assume,
That every banner may in battle wave,
Ere the sun reaches his meridian height.
[*Exit Tenantius.*
Ven. My lord and husband!
Dum. Wherefore dost thou hold me,
And in my passage thy endearments plant?
I must prepare this moment to confront
The foul and ghastly face of cruel war:
And, by the gods, I rather court at present
That shape of horror than thy beauteous form.
Then go, thou dear intruder, and remove
Thy softness from me.
Ven. I will stay no longer
Than brave Tenantius hath performed thy orders.
Long have I known thy valour, skilled to throw
The rapid dart, and lift the unconquered shield.
A confidence, like this, hath still diffused
Enough of firmness through my woman's heart,
Ne'er to molest thee with a woman's fears,
This day excepted; now my weakness governs,
And terror, too importunate, will speak.
Hast thou encountered yet such mighty powers
As down that mountain suddenly will rush?
From every part the Romans are assembled,
All versed in arms, and terrible in valour.
Dum. Tell me, thou lovely coward, am not I
As terrible? or falls the Roman sword
On the tough buckler, and the crested helm,
With deadlier weight than mine? Away, and fear not;
Secure and calm, repose thee in thy tent;
Think on thy husband, and believe he conquers:
Amid the rage of battle he will think
On thee; for thee he draws the martial blade,
For thy loved infants gripes the pointed ash.
Go, and expect me to return victorious;
Thy hand shall dress my wounds, and all be well.
Ven. Far better be our fortune, than for thee
To want that office from my faithful hand,
Or me to stain thy triumphs with my tears!
Dum. Fear not. I tell thee, when thou seest my limbs

With dust bespread, my brows with glorious sweat,
And some distinguished wound to grace my breast,
Thou, in the fulness of thy love, shalt view me,
And swear, I seem most comely in thy sight.
Thy virtue, then, shall view me worthier of thee,
Than did thy fondness on our nuptial day.
Ven. It shall be so. All wounded thou shalt find
My heart prepared to stifle its regret,
And smooth my forehead with obedient calmness.
Yet hear me further; something will I offer
More than the weak effects of female dread;
Thou goest to fight in discord with thy colleague:
It is a thought, which multiplies my fears.
Dum. Well urged, thou dearest counsellor, who best
Canst heal this mischief. Let thy meekness try
The soft persuasion of a private conference,
To win from error a bewildered sister,
While none are present to alarm her pride.
Ven. I go, but, trembling, doubt my vain attempt;
Unless, commissioned with thy dear injunctions,
My soul, exerted to perform thy pleasure,
Could give persuasion all my force of duty.
[*Exit.*

Dum. Hark! we are summoned.

Enter TENANTIUS.

Tenan. Every band is formed:
The Romans, too, in close arrangement stand.
Dum. Ye warriors, destined to begin the onset,
My Trinobantians! it is time to seek
The embattled foe. And you, all-judging gods!
Look down benignant on a righteous cause.
Indeed we cannot give you, like the Romans,
A proud and sumptuous offering: we abound not
In marble temples, or in splendid altars:
Yet though we want this vain, luxurious pomp,
Rough though we wander on the mountain's head,
Through the deep vale, and o'er the craggy rock,
We still demand your favour; we can shew
Hands, which for justice draw the avenging steel,
Firm hearts, and manners undebased by fraud.
To you, my dauntless friends, what need of words?
Your cities have been sacked, your children slain,
Your wives dishonoured—Lo! on yonder hills
You see the spoilers; there the ruffians stand.
Your hands are armed; then follow, and revenge.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT. II.

SCENE I.

Enter FLAMINIUS *and* ENOBARBUS.

Flam. Ho! Enobarbus, thou may'st now come forward.
What has thy angry soul been brooding o'er?
Enob. Well, thou hast sued, and hast obtained thy suit;
Of these barbarians meanly hast implored
Thy wretched life, and hast it. Must I thank thee
For this uncommon privilege to stand
A tame spectator of the Roman shame,
To see exulting savages o'erturn
Our walls and ramparts, see them with the spoils
Of our waste dwellings, with our captive eagles
And ancient trophies, ravished from our temples,
March in rude triumph o'er the gods of Rome?
Flam. What, thou hadst rather die!
Enob. And thou hadst rather
Live, like a dog, in chains, than die with courage,
Thou most unworthy of the Roman name!
Flam. Did those, who now inhabit Rome, deserve
The name of Romans, did the ancient spirit
Of our forefathers still survive among us,
I should applaud this bold contempt of life.
Our ancestors, who lived while Rome was free,
Might well prefer a noble fate to chains;
They lost a blessing we have never known;
Born and inured to servitude at home,
We only change one master for another,
And Dumnorix is far beyond a Nero.
Enob. Mean'st thou to mock me?
Flam. No, I mean to shew
Thy stern opinions suit not with the times.
Enob. Still by our valour we control the world,
And in that duty will I match the foremost.
If our forefathers' manners be neglected,
Free from that blame, I singly will maintain them.
My sentiments are moulded by my spirit,
Which wants thy pliant qualities to yield
With every gust of fortune, rude or mild,
And crouch beneath example, base or worthy.
Flam. Well, if thou canst not brook a British master——
Enob. No, nor thy wanton folly will I brook,
Which sports alike with slavery or freedom,
Insensible of shame.
Flam. Suppose I free thee.
Enob. Free me!
Flam. This day, if fortune be propitious.
Enob. Ha! do not cheat me with delusive fable,
And trifle with my bonds.
Flam. By all my hopes,
I do not trifle
Enob. Wilt thou give my bosom

Once more to buckle on the soldier's harness,
And meet in battle our insulting foes?
Shall my keen falchion gore the flying rout,
And raise a bleeding trophy to revenge,
For each indignity, which Rome hath borne?
Hold me no longer in suspense! instruct me,
From whence these hopes proceed!

Flam. Thou know'st I loved
The British princess.

Enob. Hast thou raised my hopes
To freedom, future victory, and honour,
And dost thou talk of love?

Flam. That love shall save us.
Thou saw'st the gentle Emmeline but now
Stole to our tent, and gave the tenderest welcome.
Unchanged I found her, soft and artless still.
The generous maid already hath suggested
The means of flight. The battle once begun,
While every Briton is intent on war,
Herself will guide us to a place of safety.

Enob. Now I commend thee.

Flam. Thou approvest, then?

Enob. Ay.

Flam. And see, the joyful moment is approaching;
See, where the unnumbered Trinobantians spread
In rude disorder o'er the vale beneath,
Whose broad extent this eminence commands.
Mark their wide-waving multitude, confused
With mingling standards, and tumultuous cars:
But, far superior to the rest, behold,
The brave and generous Dumnorix, erect
With eager hope, his lofty javelin shakes,
And with unpolished majesty adorns
The front of war.

Enob. I mark the rabble well;
And soon shall view the Romans from their station
Between those woods, which shade the adverse hills,
Sweep with resistless ardour to the vale,
And trample o'er the savages like dust.

[*A march.*

Flam. That smiling vale with pity I contemplate,
And wish more gentle footsteps might be seen
To press its verdure, and that softer notes,
Than war's terrific clamours, might be tuned
From those surrounding shades, to join the murmurs
Of that fair channel, whose sonorous bed
Receives the stream, descending from this grove
To form the limpid maze, which shines below.

Enob. I see it glistening in the noon-day sun.
But British gore will change its glassy hue.

Flam. Oh! might we rather on its friendly banks
Erect a grateful monument to peace!
That she, her sway resuming, might afford me
To clasp the gallant Dumnorix, and style him
My friend, my benefactor, and preserver.
Stand from before this tempest, while it passes.

Enter BOADICEA *and Icenians.*

Boad. Oh! I could drive this javelin through my heart,
To ease its tortures. Disobeyed! Controuled!
Even in my army's sight! Malignant powers,
If such there be, who o'er revenge preside,
Who steel the breast with ever-during hate,
And aid black rancour in its purposed mischief,
Be present now, and guide my indignation!

[*Pauses.*

The Trinobantians are advanced before me.
Let them sustain the onset; let the Romans
On Dumnorix with every cohort press,
Till he entreat for Boadicea's aid.
Then shall my eager eyes enjoy his ruin;
And when the insulting boaster is o'erthrown,
His bands dispersed, or gasping in the dust,
Then will I rush exulting in my car,
Like fierce Andate, on the wearied foe
Lead rout and slaughter, through a tide of gore
Impel my clotted wheels, redeem the day,
And, from the mouth of danger snatching conquest,
Crown my revenge with glory.

Enter VENUSIA.

Ven. Stand apart,
At my request, Icenians. O, unbend

[*To Boadicea.*

That lowering brow, and hear a suppliant sister!
So prone to error is our mortal frame,
Time could not step without a trace of horror,
If wary nature on the human heart,
Amid its wild variety of passions,
Had not impressed a soft and yielding sense,
That, when offences give resentment birth,
The kindly dews of penitence may raise
The seeds of mutual mercy and forgiveness.

Boad. Weak wretch, and yet whose impotence aspires
To mix in warlike councils, and determine
The fate of captives, won in fields of death,
Thou wouldst do better to reserve thy tears;
Thou shalt have cause for penitential torrents.

Ven. They will not wait a second birth of woe;
At thy severity they burst already.
Why turns on me that formidable aspect,
Wont with commanding sternness to behold
Its foes abashed, and victory its vassal?
Yet how much brighter is the wreath of glory,
When interwove with clemency and justice?
Thou goest to battle; there obtain renown;
But learn compassion from my tears, nor think
Benignity enfeebles, or dishonours
The most exalted valour.

Boad. Shall the tears
Of abject importunity detain me,
While Vengeance, striding from his grisly den,
With fell impatience grinds his iron teeth,
And waits my nod to satisfy his hunger?

Hence to the employment of thy feeble distaff!
Ven. Not skilled, like thee, in war's ennobling toils,
Inferior praise, and humbler tasks I court,
And own my safety in thy loftier virtues;
Yet not like thee, with unforgiving wrath,
Could I resign a sister to her grief
At this tremendous hour, so near deciding
The fate of both. One gentle word bestow,
And I will leave thee with obedient haste;
Nay, I will seek the altars, and request,
That in the future triumphs of this day,
Heaven may refuse to Dumnorix a share,
And give thee all.
Boad. Does Dumnorix consent
To sacrifice the Romans? Art thou mute?
Still does he brave me? But your favoured captives
Shall not escape. They soon shall join the victims,
Which this unconquered javelin shall reserve
To solemnize the fall of Rome's dominion.
Then to my glory Dumnorix shall bend;
In sight of Britain shall his baffled pride
The pomp of public sacrifice behold,
Behold and pine. You take a band of soldiers,
[*To an Icenean.*
Watch well around the Trinobantian tents,
And guard these Romans, as your lives. I tell thee,
[*To Venusia.*
Their gore shall yet besmear Andate's altar.
Ven. In silent awe I heard thy first resentment,
Yet hoped, the well-known accents of affection,
In kindness whispered to thy secret ear,
Might to thy breast recall its exiled pity,
That gentle inmate of a woman's heart.
Boad. Durst thou, presumptuous, entertain a thought
To give this bosom, nerved with manly strength,
The weak sensations of a female spirit?
Ven. When I remind thy elevated soul,
That we by mutual interest are but one,
And by the indissoluble ties of birth;
Are those sensations weak, which nature prompts?
With justice strengthened, can her powerful voice
Find no persuasion?
Boad. None. Provoke no more
With plaintive murmurs my indignant ear.
Thou, and thy husband, authors of my shame,
Before the assembled chiefs, may rest assured,
No prayers shall soften, no atonement bribe,
And no submission shall appease the wrong.
May desolation trample on my dwelling
A second time, rapacious force, again,
And insult, revel through my inmost chambers,
If I forgive you! Thou hast food for anguish;
Go, and indulge its appetite at leisure.
Ven. Yes, I will hasten to the holy shrine,
There wring my hands, and melt in copious sorrow,
Not for my injured self, but thee, remorseless!
To mourn thy faded honours, which, deformed
By harsh injustice to thy blameless friends,
Ne'er will revive in beauty. Not success,
Not trophies rising round thee, not the throng
Of circling captives, and their conquered standards,
Nor glorious dust of victory, can hide
From just reproach thy unrelenting scorn,
While none deplore thee, but the wronged Venusia.
[*Exit.*
Boad. Stern power of war, my patroness and guide,
To thee each Roman captive I devote.
Come then, vindictive goddess, in thy terrors;
O'erwhelm with rage his sacrilegious head,
Who would defraud thy altars! O confound
His ranks, his steeds, his chariots, and thy favour
To me, thy martial votaress, confine,
In sex like thee, and glowing with thy fires!
[*Exeunt all but Enobarbus and Flaminius.*
Enob. Do thou come forward now, and say, what terrors
Has thy dejected soul been brooding o'er?
Yon furious dame, who filled thee so with dread,
Is marching onward. Raise thy head, and look;
See, where even now with sullen pride she mounts
Her martial seat; yet wondrous slow, by Heaven,
Her car descends, nor soon will reach the vale.
Thou lookst desponding. Art thou still dismayed?
Thinkst thou yon dreadful woman will return?
From us she moves, though slowly; then take comfort!
Flam. Far other cares than terror fill my breast.
Enob. What means this languor? Wherefore heaves that sigh?
Flam. O Enobarbus, wilt thou bear my weakness?
I see the moment of deliverance near,
Yet pine with grief.
Enob. Whate'er the folly be,
With which thy bosom teems, the gods confound it!
Flam. To see the dearest object of my soul,
Just see her after such a tedious absence,
Then vanish from her sight perhaps for ever;
When these reflections rise, the sweet exchange
From bonds to freedom, which to her I owe,
Is mixed with bitterness, and joy subsides.
Enob. Why didst thou leave the fair Italian fields,
Thou silken slave of Venus? What could move
Thee to explore these boisterous northern climes,
And change yon radiant sky for Britain's clouds?
What dost thou here, effeminate? By Heaven,
Thou shouldst have loitered in Campania's villas,
And in thy garden nursed, with careful hands,
The gaudy-vested progeny of Flora;

Or indolently paced the pebbled shore,
And eyed the beating of the Tuscan wave,
To waste thy irksome leisure. Wilt thou tell me,
What thou dost here in Britain? Dost thou come
To sigh and pine? Could Italy afford
No food for these weak passions? Must thou traverse
Such tracts of land, and visit this cold region,
To love and languish? Answer me, what motive
First brought thee hither? But forbear to urge
It was in quest of honour; for the god
Of war disclaims thee.
Flam. Well, suppose I answer,
That friendship drew me from the golden Tiber,
With thee to combat this inclement sky,
Will it offend thee?
Enob. No, I am thy friend,
And I will make a Roman of thee still;
But let me see no languishing dejection
More on thy brow, nor hear unmanly sighs.
Gods! canst thou dream of love, when yonder see,
The Roman legions, all arrayed for battle,
Are now descending; see their dreaded eagles,
Their dazzling helmets, and their crimson plumes;
A grove of javelins glitters down the steep;
They point their terrors on the astonished foe;
Soon will they charge the Britons in the vale,
And with the auspicious glories of this day
Enrich the annals of imperial Rome
O curst captivity! with double weight
I feel thee now! malicious fate! to suffer
A Roman thus to stand confined in bondage,
And see the triumphs, which he cannot share.
By Heaven, Flaminius! I will never bear it.
Where is thy Briton? Will she lead us hence?
Else, by the god of war, unarmed I rush
To join the glorious scene, which opens there.
Flam. I see her coming, and will fly to meet her. [*Exit.*
Enob. Our time is short, remember, do not dally.
I have a thought, lies ripening in my breast,
And teems with future glory; if the fight
Prove undecisive, and these tents subsist,
Soon will I bid thee, hostile camp, farewell.
Thou sawest me come in thraldom; I depart
A fugitive: if ever I return,
Thou shalt receive me in another guise;
Then shalt thou feel me; when my shining helm
Shall strike cold terror through thy boldest guards,
And from its lofty crest destruction shake.
[*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter FLAMINIUS *and* ENOBARBUS.

Flam. OUR lovely guide attends us. Thy impatience
Hath called me loiterer.
Enob. Thou mayest loiter still.
Thou canst not hasten, nor retard our fate,
Which is irrevocably fixed.
Flam. What sayest thou?
Enob. I say, prepare to die. If Boadicea
Return once more, our destiny is fixed.
Whate'er her merciless revenge may purpose,
Elate with conquest, or incensed by loss,
If on the rack to strain our bursting sinews,
If from the bleeding trunks to lop our limbs,
Or with slow fires protract the hours of pain,
We must abide it all. Collect thy spirit,
And, like a Roman, dauntless wait thy doom.
Flam. I hear thee, but thy meaning—
Enob. Hear again:
Before the tent some paces as I stood,
And joyful saw the Trinobantian guard,
Of us neglectful, from this quarter drawn
To view the impending battle; on a sudden
A cursed Icenian cast his jealous eye
Athwart my steps, then call'd a numerous band,
Who prowl around us, as a destin'd prey.
Flam. Malicious fortune!
Enob. Now thou seest my meaning.
Flam. Our flight were vain, while these observe us.
Enob. True.
What has thy tame submission now availed,
Thy abject supplication to barbarians?
Hadst thou with courage met thy fate at first,
We had been dead, ere now.
Flam. To view the sun
Through his gay progress from the morn, till even,
Possess my friends, my parents, and my love,
Within the circle of my native walls,
Were joys I deemed well worthy of my care;
But since that care is fruitless, I can leave
This light, my friends, my parents, love, and country,
As little daunted at my fate as thou,
Though not so unconcerned.
Enob. Oh, Mars and Vesta!
Is it a vision, which you raise before me
To charm my eyes? Behold a scene, Flaminius,
To cheer a Roman in the gasp of death!
The Britons are defeated; look, Flaminius,
Back from the vale in wild tumultuous flight
Behold their numbers sweeping toward the hill;
Already some are swarming up its side,
To reach their camp for shelter; pale dismay
With hostile rage pursues their broken rear,
While massacre, unchidden, cloys his famine,
And quaffs the blood of nations. Oh! in vain

Dost thou oppose thy bosom to the tide
Of war, and brandish that recovered standard!
Vain is thy animating voice to those,
Whom fear makes deaf! Oh, Dumnorix! thy toils
Are fruitless; Britain in the scale of fate
Yields to the weight of Rome. Now, life, farewell!
Shine on, bright Phœbus! those who rest behind
To share thy splendors, while I sink in darkness,
Are far beneath my envy. I resign
These eyes with pleasure to eternal shades;
They now have seen enough.
Flam. Whence this despair?
A blind confusion fills the spacious camp.
Already consternation hath dispersed
Our guard. Even Dumnorix retires—He comes;
Avoid him—Trust me, I am well instructed,
And will conduct thee to a safe retreat.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter DUMNORIX *with a standard.*

Dum. Thou hard-kept remnant of our shattered fortune,
Stand there before the partial eye of Heaven,
Which has preferred the Romans' splendid altars
To the plain virtue of a British heart.
Presumptuous frenzy! Why is Heaven reproached?
Oh, Boadicea, thou perfidious mischief!

Enter VENUSIA.

Ven. Now let my duty o'er my fear prevail,
Fill my whole breast with tenderness, and heal,
With sweetest comfort, thy distress.
Dum. My wife!
Thou most unlike to yon degenerate woman,
Her country's bane!
Ven. I tremble at thy words.
Dum. Be not dismayed; the camp is still our own.
Night is impending, and the Romans halt.
Ven. But what of Boadicea?
Dum. Hear, and mourn.
The Trinobantians scarce had filled the vale,
When, from a narrow pass between the woods,
Forth burst the Romans wedged in deep array.
I found our struggle vain, and sent for aid
To Boadicea; she, with scorn, replied,
I did not want the assistance of a woman;
Nor left her station, till my broken ranks
Were driven among the Icenians; in a moment
All was confusion, slaughter, and defeat.

Enter BOADICEA.

Dum. Gods! art thou safe?
Ven. Oh! most unhappy sister!
When last we parted, cruel were thy words,
A sure presage of endless grief to me;
Yet my desponding spirit ne'er foreboded,
That thou couldst deviate from a prosperous course,
When every gale conspired to swell thy glory.
Boad. Throw not on me the crime of envious fortune.
Dum. Dost thou blame fortune, traitress?
Boad. Then the blame
Take on thy single head.
Dum. Avoid my sight!
Boad. Thou ledst the van.
Dum. Avaunt!
Boad. Thou fled'st the first.
Now find'st too late the importance of a woman.
Dum. Too true I find a woman cursed with power
To blast a nation's welfare. Heavenly rulers!
How have our Britons merited this shame?
Have we with fell ambition, like the Romans,
Unpeopled realms, and made the world a desert?
Have we your works defaced; or how deserved
So large a measure of your bitterest wrath,
That you should clothe this spirit of a wolf
In human form, and blend her lot with ours?
Boad. Beset with perils, as I am, pursued
By rout and havoc to the encircling toil;
Untamed by this reverse, my lofty soul,
Upbraiding still thy arrogance, demands,
Who spared the captive Romans? Who provoked
My just resentment? Who, in power, in name
And dignity inferior, but elate
With blind presumption, and by envy stung,
Dared to dispute with me supreme command,
Then pale and trembling turned his back on danger?
Ven. Oh, once united by the friendliest ties,
And leaders both of nations, shall this land
Still view its bulwarks, tottering with disunion,
Enhance the public and their own misfortunes?
Thou, my complacent lord, were wont to smooth
That manly front at pity's just complaint;
And thou, entrusted with a people's welfare,
A queen and warrior, let disdain no more
Live in the midst of danger—See Venusia
Upon her knees——
Dum. Shall thy perfections kneel
To this——
Ven. Oh! stop, nor give resentment utterance.
In such a cause the proudest knee might sue
To less than Boadicea—Turn not from me!
[*To Boadicea.*
Look on a prostrate sister; think, thou hear'st
Our children's plaintive notes enforce my prayer,
And Albion's genius mix his solemn moan;
That lamentations through thy ears resound,
From all the wives and mothers of those thousands,
Whose limbs lie stretched on yonder field of death;
Those wretched wives and mothers, oh! reflect,
But for the fatal discord of this day,
With other looks, with other cries and gestures,

†

With different transports, and with different tears,
Might have received their sons and husbands home,
Than they will now survey their pale remains,
Which there lie mangled by the Roman sword,
To feed the raven's hunger—yet relent!
Yet let restoring union close our wounds,
And to repair this ruin be thy praise!

Dum. Rise, rise. Thy mildness, whose persuasive charm
No cruelty, but hers, could hear unmoved,
In vain would render placable and wise
That malice, inhumanity, and frenzy,
Which have already wasted such a store
Of glory and success.

Boad. Oh!

Dum. Dost thou groan?

Boad. No, no, I do not feel a moment's pain.

Dum. Thy words are false. Thy heart o'erflows with anguish.

Boad. No, I despise both thee and fortune still.

Dum. By Heaven, I know distraction rends thy soul,
And to its view presents the approaching scene
Of shame and torture, when the indignant Romans
Exact a tenfold vengeance for their sufferings;
And when thou passest through their streets in chains,
The just derision of insulting foes,
A frantic woman, who resigned her hopes,
And, to indulge an empty pride, betrayed
Her children, friends, and country; then recal,
What once was Boadicea, fallen how low
From all her honours, by her folly fallen
From power, from empire, victory, and glory,
To vilest bonds, and ignominious stripes.

Boad. May curses blast thee, worse than I can utter,
And keener pangs than whips or shackles seize thee!

Ven. Oh! sister, how unseemly is this rage!
Whom dost thou load with these ungenerous curses?
Thy faithful friend, thy counsellor and brother,
Whom thou hast injured, injured past the power
Of reparation. Dost thou call for whips
To print those venerable limbs with shame,
For bonds to humble that majestic head,
Which foes themselves must honour? Yet, if chains
Must be our fate, what cruel hand hath forged them,
But thine alone? Thy hand hath heaped destruction
On him, thy once revered ally, on me,
On my poor children, guiltless of offence,
And on thy own, who claimed protection from thee;
Yet thou, obdurate, to thy rage a prey,
Dost chide remorse and pity from thy breast.

Dum. Source of thy own afflictions! to behold thee [*To Boadicea.*
Distracted thus, thus fallen and lost, to see
Thus strongly painted on thy labouring features
The pangs thou feel'st within, awakes compassion.

Boad. Ha! no——divine Andate shall uphold me
Above thy pity. Think'st thou, Boadicea
Is thus deserted by her patron goddess,
Thus void of all resources? Think so still,
And be deceived. Even now I feel her aid;
[*Aside.*
I feel her here; the warlike queen inspires
My pregnant soul; the mighty plan is forming;
It grows, it labours in my ardent bosom;
It springs to life, and calls for instant action;
Lead on, exert thee, goddess! till the furies,
Which heretofore have thundered at thy heels,
Start at the new-born horrors of this night.
[*Exit.*

Ven. Oh! Dumnorix, how virtue hath recoiled
Upon itself! my interposing pity,
Thy manly firmness in a generous act,
Gave these disasters being.

Dum. I forbid thee
To blame thy virtues, which the gods approve,
And I revere. Now leave me to concert,
With our surviving chiefs, the means of safety.

Ven. Oh! that, like me compliant, at thy word,
Peace, a benign companion, would attend,
And moderate thy cares, while I depart! [*Exit.*

Dum. Have I been guilty? answer me, my heart,
Who now wouldst burst my agonizing breast—
Hath Dumnorix been guilty? Wilt thou, Britain,
To me impute the horrors of this day?
Perhaps a Roman's policy had yielded,
And to a colleague's cruelty and pride
Had sacrificed humanity and justice:
I did not so, and Albion is destroyed.
Yet, oh, be witness, all ye generous spirits,
So lately breathing in those heaps of death,
That in this day's extremity and peril,
Your Dumnorix was mindful of his charge;
My shivered javelin, my divided shield,
And blunted sword, be witness for your master,
You were not idle in that dreadful hour;
Nor even amid the carnage piled around me,
Will I relinquish my pursuit of hope——
Hope may elude me—For myself I fear not——
But my Venusia—Ha! prepare, my soul——
There is thy struggle, on her tender mind
To graft thy firmness, which can welcome death,
And hold it gain, when liberty is lost. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter DUMNORIX.

Dum. TILL good Tenantius and the rest return,
I have been led by solitary care
To yon dark branches, spreading o'er the brook,
Which murmurs through the camp; this mighty camp,
Where once two hundred thousand sons of war,
With restless din, awaked the midnight hour.
Now horrid stillness in the vacant tents
Sits undisturbed; and these incessant rills,
Whose pebbled channel breaks their shallow stream,
Fill with their melancholy sound my ears,
As if I wandered like a lonely hind,
O'er some dead fallow, far from all resort:
Unless that, ever and anon, a groan
Bursts from a soldier, pillowed on his shield
In torment, or expiring with his wounds,
And turns my fixed attention into horror.
Venusia comes—The hideous scene around me
Now prompts the hard but necessary duty.——
Yet how to name thee, death, without thy terrors!

Enter VENUSIA.

Ven. Thou didst enjoin my absence. I departed.
With ill-timed care if now returning——
Dum. No.
Ven. Alas! deep-plunged in sadness still I find thee.
Dum. Dost thou? Come nearer. Thou hast seen this day,
How thy perfidious, thy inveterate sister
Hath stained my glory, and my fortune baffled;
Thou hast received me vanquished, who before
Was used to greet thee with the sound of conquest.
Now tell me truly; am I still the same
In my Venusia's eyes?
Ven. What means my lord?
Dum. Am I still loved and honoured, as before?
Ven. Canst thou suspect that fortune rules my love?
Thy power and honours may be snatched away,
Thy wide possessions pass to other lords,
And frowning heaven resume whate'er it gave,
All but my love, which ne'er shall know decay,
But ev'n in ruin shall augment its fondness.
Dum. Then will my dictates be regarded still.
Ven. Impart this moment thy revered commands;
And if it prove within my slender power
To ease thy troubles, I will bless the gods,
And, unrepining, to our fate submit.
Dum. Think not my own calamities distress me;
I can encounter fortune's utmost malice:
But, oh! for thee, Venusia——
Ven. Do not fear.
While in these faithful arms I hold my lord,
I never shall complain. Let every ill,
Let ruin and captivity o'ertake me,
With thee I will be happy.
Dum. Ha! Venusia!
Could thou and I find happiness together,
Deprived of freedom? Dost thou mark?
Ven. I do.
Dum. Thou art most fair; but could thy lovely face
Make slavery look comely? Could the touch
Of that soft hand convey delight to mine,
With servile fetters on?
Ven. Why dost thou gaze
Thus stedfastly upon me?
Dum. I would have thee
Reflect once more upon the loss of freedom.
Ven. It is the heaviest, sure, of human woes.
Dum. Learn one thing more, and, though relentless Heaven
Its care withdraws from this ill-destined isle,
Thou, in the fall of nations, shalt be safe.
Oh! heed, Venusia! never did thy welfare
Raise in my breast such tender cares before;
Else from the public danger would I spare
These precious moments to assist thy virtue?
Ven. Thou makest me all attention.
Dum. Reach thy hand.
Now, while I hold thee, do I bless Andate,
That this free hand, protected by my sword,
Hath not yet known the shameful doom of bondage.
Ven. Nor shall I know it; thy unshaken valour
Will be my safeguard still.
Dum. If fate confounds
My utmost efforts, can I then protect thee?
Ven. Why dost thou leave me to despair? Why fill
My breast with terrors? Never did I see thee,
Till this sad hour, thus hopeless and dejected.
Oh! how shall I, a woman, weak and fearful,
Sustain my portion of the general woe,
If thou, in perils exercised and war,
Dost to ill fortune bow thy gallant spirit?
Dum. Think not, Venusia, I abandon hope.
No, on the verge of ruin will I stand,
And, dauntless, combat with our evil fate;
Nor till its rancour bear me to the bottom,
My soul shall ever entertain despair:
But as the wisest and the best resolved
Cannot controul the doubtful chance of war,
I would prepare thee for the worst event.
Ven. Fly where thou wilt, my faithful steps shall follow.

I can pursue thy course with naked feet,
Though roaming o'er the rough and pointed crags,
Or through the pathless tract of deepest woods;
By thy dear hand supported, would I pass
Through the cold snow, which hides the mountain's brow,
And o'er the frozen surface of the vale.
Dum. Thou best of women! I believe thou wouldst;
Believe thy constant heart would teach those limbs,
Thus soft and gentle, to support all hardship,
And hold with me society in toil.
But should we want the wretched power to fly,
What then?
Ven. What then?
Dum. The Romans may surround us.
Ven. How wouldst thou act in such a dreadful season?
Dum. Ne'er shall the hands of Dumnorix endure
The shame of fetters; ne'er shall Rome behold
This breast, which honourable war hath seamed,
Pant with the load of bondage: generous wounds!
Ye deep engraven characters of glory,
Ye faithful monitors of Albion's cause,
Oft, when your midnight anguish had rebuked
Oblivious slumber from my watchful pillow,
And in her danger kept my virtue waking:
You, when that office can avail no more,
Will look more graceful on my death-cold bosom,
Than to be shewn before the scoffing Romans,
Should they behold that Dumnorix in shackles,
Whom they once dreaded in the field of war.
Ven. Assist me, Heaven!
Dum. Speak out. I watch to hear thee.
My powers are all suspended with attention.
Ven. What shall I do?
Dum. Explain thy thoughts.
Ven. I cannot.
Dum. Why canst thou not? Remember who thou art,
And who thy husband is.
Ven. The first of men,
Joined to the least deserving of her sex.
Dum. View thy own heart; be conscious of thy merit;
And, in his strength confiding, be secure,
That thou art worthy of the greatest man,
And not unequal to the noblest task.
Ven. Oh, I will struggle to assert that claim!
Yet, dearest lord, extend thy whole indulgence,
Nor undeserving of thy love esteem me,
While trembling thus.
Dum. I know thy native softness.
Yet wherefore dost thou tremble? Speak, my love.
Ven. Oh, I have not thy courage, not been used,
Like thee, to meet the dreadful shape of death;
I never felt the anguish of a wound;
Thy arm hath still kept danger at a distance:
If now it threatens, and my heart no more
Must beat with safety, it is new to me.
Dum. It is, my love. My tenderness implies
No expectation, that thy gentle mind
Should be at once familiarized with fate.
Not insurmountable I hold our danger.
But to provide against delusive fortune,
That thou may'st bear, unterrified, the lot,
Which best shall suit thy dignity and name,
Demands thy care; take counsel of thy virtue.
Ven. I will.
Dum. And arm thy breast with resolution.
Ven. Indeed I will, and ask the gracious gods
To fill my heart with constancy and spirit,
And shew me worthy of a man, like thee:
Perhaps their succour, thy revered injunction,
And high example, may controul my terrors.
But, Oh! what power shall soothe another care,
Than life more precious, and a keener pang
Than death's severest agony, relieve;
The sad remembrance of my helpless infants,
Our love's dear pledges, who before me rise
In orphan woe, defenceless and forsaken,
And all my borrowed fortitude dissolve!
Dum. Thou perfect pattern of maternal fondness,
And conjugal compliance, rest assured,
That care was never absent from my soul.
Confide in me; thy children shall be safe.
Ven. How safe?
Dum. Shall live in safety. Thou shalt know.
Mean time retire. Our anxious chiefs, returned,
Wait my commands, and midnight is advancing.
[*Exit Venusia.*
She goes——her love and duty will surmount
This hideous task——Oh, morning, bright in hope,
Closed by a night of horror, which reduces
This poor——dear woman, yet in blooming years,
Blessed in her husband, in her offspring blessed,
Perhaps to cut her stem of being short
With her own tender hand——if ever tears
Might sort with valour, nor debase a soldier,
It would be now——Ha! whither do I plunge?

Enter EBRANCUS, TENANTIUS, *and Trinobantians.*

Dum. Well, my brave friends, what tidings?
Ebran. Through thy quarter,
With weary steps, and mourning, have we traversed
A silent desert of unpeopled tents,
Quite to the distant station of the Icenians.
Their chiefs we found in council round the queen;
The multitude was arming: twenty thousand
Were yet remaining, and unhurt by war,
Unlike our Trinobantians, who, unaided,
The fatal onset bore. Those huge battalions,
Which Rome so dreaded, are, alas! no more.
Dum. Be not dejected. Far the greater part

Are fled for shelter to their native roofs,
And will rejoin us, when with force repaired
We may dispute our island still with Rome.
But have you gained access to Boadicea?
Ebran. We have.
Dum. What said she?
Ebran. She approved thy counsel.
Dum. You told her, then, my purpose to retreat
Through yonder forest?
Ebran. To herself alone
We told it.
Dum. I commend you. You have saved us
A conference, both needless and unpleasing.
Ebran. She further bade us note, how all the Icenians
Were then in arms, and ready to advance.
Dum. Return, and tell her, (let thy phrase, Ebrancus,
Be soft and humble) ere two hours be wasted,
We must begin our march. Do you explore
[*To the other Trinobantians.*
The secret passage, and with winged haste
Bring back your tidings. Thou, Tenantius, wait;
[*Exeunt Ebrancus and Trinobantians.*
To thee my inmost bosom I must open,
And to thy friendship trust my tenderest cares.
Thou must pursue thy journey, heed me well,
Quite through the forest——Dost thou know the pass?
Tenan. Yes; where those gushing waters leave the grove,
To seek the valley deeper in the shade,
From the same fountain flows a smaller brook,
Whose secret channel through the thicket winds,
And will conduct me farther down the vale——
Dum. Which once attained, proceed and gain my dwelling.
Give me thy honest hand. Come nearer, soldier,
Thy faithful bosom would I clasp to mine——
Perhaps thy general and thou may never
Embrace again.
Tenan. What means my fearless chief?
Why hast thou called this unaccustomed moisture
Into thy soldier's eyes?
Dum. Thou dost not weep,
My gallant veteran! I have been to blame.
A tenderness, resulting from a care,
Which struggles here, subdued me for a moment.
This shall be soon discharged, and all be well.
I have two boys: if, after all my efforts,
(I speak, not prompted by despair, but caution)
Rome should prevail against me, and our hopes
Abortive fall, take thou these helpless infants;
With thee transport them to our northern frontiers,
And hide them deep in Caledonian woods.
There, in their growing years, excite and cherish
The dear remembrance of their native fields;
That, to redeem them from the Italian spoiler,
If e'er some kind occasion should invite,
Forth from their covert they may spring undaunted.
Ne'er let the race of Dumnorix divert
One thought from Albion to their own repose.
Remind them often of their father's toils,
Whom thou leavest grappling to the last with fortune.
And if beneath this island's mouldering state,
I, to avoid disgraceful chains, must sink,
Fain would my spirit in the hope depart,
That on the ruins, which surround my fall,
A new-born structure may hereafter stand,
Raised by my virtue, living in my sons. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter VENUSIA.

Ven. A HOLLOW sound of tumult strikes my ear;
Perhaps the howl of some night-roaming wolves,
Who, waked by hunger, from their gloomy haunts
Are trooping forth, to make their fell repast
On my fresh-bleeding countrymen, whose limbs
O'erspread the valley. Shall I mourn your fall,
Lost friends, who, couched in death, forget your cares,
I, who may shortly join your ghastly band,
Unless that forest yield its promised aid?
O hope, sweet flatterer! whose delusive touch
Sheds on afflicted minds the balm of comfort,
Relieves the load of poverty, sustains
The captive, bending with the weight of bonds,
And smooths the pillow of disease and pain,
Send back the exploring messenger with joy,
And let me hail thee from that friendly grove!

Enter DUMNORIX.

Dum. Why hast thou left thy couch?
Ven. I heard a sound,
Like tumult at a distance.
Dum. So did I,
As near the opening pass I stood, to watch
Our messenger's return.

Enter EBRANCUS.

What means this haste?
Why lookst thou pale?
Ebran. With thy instructions charged,
I sought the Icenian quarter. All around
Was solitude and silence. When I called,
No voice replied. To Boadicea's tent
With fearful haste I trod. Her daughters there

I found in consternation. I enquired
The cause: they answered only with their tears;
Till from the princess Emmeline at last
I learned, that all the Icenians were that hour
In silent march departed; but their course
She could not tell me: that her furious mother
Had, with a fell, determined look, enjoined them
To wait her pleasure, which should soon be known;
Mean time to rest immoveable and mute.

Enter an Icenean carrying a bowl.

Ven. My Dumnorix, defend me!
Dum. Ha! what means
This wild demeanour—wilt thou speak, Icenean?
Fear not, my love; thy Dumnorix is near.
What is that bowl, thou carriest?
Icen. Honoured chief,
If aught appears disordered in my gesture,
Which ill becomes the reverence I owe thee,
Charge that demerit to my horrid errand,
And not to me.
Ven. What will befall us now!
Dum. [*To the Icenean.*] Wilt thou begin?
Icen. I come from Boadicea.
Dum. Where is she?
Icen. Far advanced o'er yonder vale.
Dum. With what intention?
Icen. To assail the Romans.
Dum. Assail the Romans!
Icen. To surprise their camp,
At this dead hour, with unexpected slaughter.
Before she marched, to me this secret charge,
In words like these she gave. 'Observe our course;
'When I have passed the camp's extremest verge,
'Back to my daughters and Venusia speed:
'Tell them, I go our fortune to restore,
'If unsuccessful, never to return.
'Should that stern doom attend me, bid them take
'The last, best gift, which dying I can leave them;
'That of my blood no part may prove dishonoured.
'The Trinobantian, of his Roman friends
'So well deserving, may accept their grace.'
This said, with wild emotion in her breast,
Her visage blackening with despair and horror,
She straight committed to my trembling hands
Two fatal bowls, which flow with poisoned streams:
I have accomplished half my horrid task
With Boadicea's daughters.
Dum. Frantic woman!
Who hopes with fury and despair to match
The vigilance and conduct of Suetonius.
Icen. From this ill-fated hand receive the draught,
Whose hue and odour warrant it the juice
Of that benumbing plant, the Druids gather;
That plant, whose drowsy moisture lulls the sense,
And, with a silent influence, expels
The unresisting spirit from her seat.
Dum. Mistaken woman! did she deem Venusia
Was unprovided of this friendly potion——
Perform thy orders; bear it to my tent.
Thou mayst not want it yet——take comfort, love.

Enter a second Icenian.

2d Icen. Oh! Dumnorix!
Dum. Icenian, spare thy voice.
Thy flight, thy terror, and thy wounds interpret
Too plainly.
2d Icen. We are vanquished.
Dum. I believe thee.
2d Icen. Oh! I have much to tell thee—but I faint.
Dum. [*To Ebrancus.*] Conduct him hence, and learn the whole event,
[*Exit Icenian, with Ebrancus.*
Ven. On you, celestial arbiters, we call.
Now as we stand environed by distress,
Now weigh our actions past, deformed, or fair.
If e'er oppression hath defiled his valour,
In help and pity to the woes of others,
Our hearts been scanty, and our hands reserved,
Let our transgressions ratify our doom:
Else with your justice let our merits plead,
To hold its shield before us, and repel
These undeserved misfortunes!
Dum. Heaven may hear,
And through that forest lead us still to safety.
Ha! no; each power against us is combined;
What but their anger, levelled at our heads,
Could bring Tenantius back, so strictly charged
To seek our home—the intercepting foes
Have seized the secret pass.
Ven. Whose guardian care
Now to the gloomy shelter of a desert,
To solitary innocence and peace,
Will guide our friendless orphans?
Dum. True, Venusia.
Through every trial Heaven is pleased to lead us,
Droop not—one comfort never can forsake us.
The mind, to virtue trained, in every state,
Rejoicing, grieving, dying, must possess
The exalted pleasure to exert that virtue.

Enter TENANTIUS.

Ven. Speak, speak, Tenantius!
Tenan. We pursued our course,
But had not travelled far, before we heard
The sound of footsteps dashing through the brook,
Whose winding channel marks the secret way.
Not long we stood in wonder, ere a troop
Of Romans sallied forth, and made us captives.
Dum. Why then, farewell to what was left of hope.
Tenan. Not so, my lord.

Ven. Speak. What resource is left?
Tenan. We were conducted to the Roman leaders;
One fierce and haughty, gentler far the other,
Who calmed his stern companion, gave us comfort,
Named thee with reverence; then, an ardent zeal
Disclosing for thy safety, and requesting
A short, but friendly conference between you,
With courtesy dismissed us.
Ven. Is he near?
Tenan. Hard by he waits for an impatient answer,
Just where the pass is open to the tent.
Dum. What would the Roman?
Ven. Hasten back, Tenantius,
And say, that Dumnorix consents to parley.
Dum. Ha! trust our freedom in a Roman's power?
Tenan. Unarmed and single will the Roman join thee.
Dum. Oh, ineffectual effort!
Ven. Only see him,
If but to parley for thy children's safety.
Weak as I am, unequal to these conflicts,
I would embrace destruction, ere request thee
Once to comply with aught below thy greatness.
Dum. Let him approach.

Enter EBRANCUS.

What hast thou learnt, my soldier?
Ebran. Like ours, the Icenian force is all destroyed.
Dum. And Boadicea.
Ebran. Nought of her I know,
But that she found the Roman host embattled,
Which she had fondly deemed immersed in sleep.
Dum. And so is fallen a victim to her folly.
Retire. [*Exit Ebrancus.*

Enter FLAMINIUS.

Tenan. [*To Flam.*] Thy helmet cast aside, restores thee
To my remembrance. Lo! thy benefactors.
Flam. Brave Dumnorix!
Dum. My captive!
Flam. Yes, Flaminius,
Who owes to thy humanity his life.
Dum. Where hast thou hid thee from my notice? Rather,
Whence now return'st, ennobled with command,
No more in thraldom, but a Roman leader?
Flam. Amid the tumult of your late defeat
We sought the adjacent forest; thence we passed
The vale below, and reached the Roman tents.
Dum. And now are masters of our late retreat—
Had I been cruel, Britain had been safe.
Flam. Was this an act unworthy of a soldier?
Dum. Our woes are all the progeny of folly,
Not charged to thee or fortune.
Ven. Heaven, well pleased,
Perhaps ordained this unforeseen event,
That our benevolence to brave Flaminius
Its due return of gratitude should find.
Flam. The life you gave me, to your mutual welfare
I here devote. My influence, my power,
My thoughts, my care, to soften your afflictions,
Shall all combine. Surrender to your friend,
Before Suetonius, with his legions, pours
On your defenceless camp, who long in arms
Hath stood, expecting the appointed signal,
Which he enjoined us with the dawn to rear.
Dum. Though thou didst well, accepting life from me,
That gift from thee must Dumnorix refuse.
Flam. Thou wilt not rob my gratitude of power,
To shew how well thy goodness was bestowed!
Dum. Wouldst thou see me led
A sullen captive, and through haughty Rome,
Inglorious, count my paces to the clink
Of my own chains? This faithful woman too—
Ven. Like thee, disdains a being so preserved.
Flam. Oh, let me water with my tears your feet!
If every drop, which issues from my heart,
Could from the doom you justly scorn secure you,
Before you now the purple sluice should open;
And let my knees, in humblest adoration,
Before such elevated virtue bend.
Oh, god-like Britons! my acknowledged patrons
And benefactors, if my soul retain not
Your memory for ever dear and sacred,
May disappointment, poverty, and shame
Deform my life, and pining sickness close
My youthful eyes untimely in the grave!
Dum. Thou seem'st, of all the Romans, to possess
A heart which feels for others. Rise and hear.
Though we reject the wretched boon of life,
Thou may'st, Flaminius, yet repay our bounty.
Flam. Then will I ask no other grace from Heaven.
Dum. We have two children——
Ven. Oh, my bleeding heart!
My poor, deserted infants, whom these arms
No more must cherish, nor my lulling voice
Hush in the quiet of my sheltering bosom!
Dum. [*Aside.*] Yet shall not this unman me. I will feel
A father's anguish, but conceal the pain.
[*To Flam.*] Know, then, I meant this faithful friend, Tenantius,
Should traverse yonder wood to reach my dwelling,
Which lies remote, and thence convey my sons
Far from these borders, to extremest north,
Where they might rest secure, nor share the ills
Doomed to their parents. Wilt thou let him pass?
Flam. I will, and Jove be witness to my word!

Dum. Give thy last charge, Venusia, to Tenantius.
One word apart with thee, my Roman friend.
As thou art generous, answer me with truth.
When must thou make thy signal?
Flam. At the dawn,
Whose beams, though faint, already tinge the east.
Dum. What time will bring your legions near this tent?
Flam. An hour at farthest.
Dum. I have heard, Flaminius,
Of your forefathers' spirit, how they fell
Oft on their swords to shun ignoble bondage.
This part have we to act; and, friendly Roman,
When thou shalt see our cold remains—my own
Are little worth attention—Oh, remember
Venusia's goodness, and her gentle clay
Defend from shame and insult!
Flam. Thou dost pierce
My heart—I cannot answer—But believe
These tears sincere.
Dum. Enough. Perform thy promise.
Thy obligations will be then discharged.
Farewell. Fulfil thy general's commands.
[*Exit Flaminius.*
Ven. [*To Tenan.*] Thou future parent of my orphan babes,
Soon as their generous minds imbibe thy precepts,
And thy example warms their budding virtues,
Do not forget to tell them, that no perils,
Nor death in all its terrors, can efface
Maternal love; that their ill-fated mother,
Amid this awful season of distress,
Wept but for them, and lost her fears in fondness.
Dum. We have been long companions, brave Tenantius,
Thy leader I, once fortunate and great,
And thou my faithful and intrepid soldier.
Nay, do not weep; we have not time for wailing.
By thy approved fidelity and love,
Thy chief, just entering death's unfolded gates,
Stops, and once more conjures thee to retain
This his last charge in memory—his children.
[*Exit Tenantius.*
The sun is risen. All hail! thou last of days
To this nigh-finished being. Radiant power!
Thou through thy endless journey mayest proclaim,
That Dumnorix died free, for thou shalt view it.
Behold! the appointed signal from the grove,
Just as Flaminius warned us, is upreared,
To call Suetonius and his legions on.
Come Desolation, Tyranny, resort
To thy new seat; come, Slavery, and bend
The neck of Albion, all her sons debase,
And ancient virtue from their hearts expel!
Now, then, ye honoured mansions of our fathers,
Ye hallowed altars, and ye awful groves,
The habitation of our gods, farewell!
And yet the guilty authoress of these woes
Deserves a share of praise, who, still retaining
One unextinguished spark of generous honour,
Scorned to remain spectatress or partaker
Of Albion's fall, and, dying, still is free.
Need I say more, Venusia?
This last embrace. And now prepare, Venusia.
Ven. Oh, my lord!
Dum. Why heaves that sigh?
Ven. Alas, I am a woman!
Dum. True, a defenceless woman, and exposed
To keener sorrow by thy matchless beauty;
That charm, which captivates the victor's eye,
Yet, helpless to withstand his savage force,
Throws wretched woman under double ruin.
But wherefore this? Thy virtue knows its duty.
Ven. Stay but a little!
Dum. Would I might for years!
But die that thought!—False tenderness, away!
Thou British genius, who art now retiring
From this lost region, yet suspend thy flight,
And in this conflict lend me all thy spirit——
We only ask thee to be free, and die. [*Aside.*
Well, my Venusia, is thy soul resolved,
Or shall I still afford a longer pause?
Ven. Though my weak sex by nature is not armed
With fortitude like thine, of this be sure,
That dear subjection to thy honoured will,
Which hath my life directed, even in death
Shall not forsake me; and thy faithful wife
Shall with obedience meet thy last commands.
But canst thou tell me? Is it hard to die?
Dum. Oh! rather ask me, if to live in shame,
Captivity, and sorrow, be not hard?
Ven. Oh, miserable!
Dum. In a foreign land
The painful toils of servitude to bear
From an imperious mistress?
Ven. Dreadful thought!
Dum. Or be insulted with the hateful love
Of some proud master?
Ven. Oh, proceed
No further!
Dum. From thy native seat of dwelling,
From all the known endearments of thy home,
From parents, children, friends, and—husband torn!——
Ven. Stop there, and reach the potion; nor to drink
The cure of troubles will I longer pause.
[*Exit Dumnorix.*
For every past possession of delight,
Both in my offspring and their godlike sire,
A dying matron bends her grateful knee,
Ye all-disposing powers! as now these blessings
Must reach their period, to my sons transfer
That copious goodness, I have shared so long!
Through my resigning soul that promise breathe,
And my last moments comfort thus with peace!

Re-enter DUMNORIX *with a bowl.*

Dum. [*Aside, seeing Venusia on her knees.*]
Hold, resolution; now be doubly armed.
[*He gives her the bowl, and she drinks.*
Now stand awhile before the fanning breeze;
So, with its subtle energy, the potion,
Less rudely stealing on the powers of life,
Will best perform its office, to remove
Pain, fear, and grief, for ever from thy breast.
Dost thou not feel already every terror
Begin to lessen? that a calm succeeds
Within thy bosom, banishing the sense
Of present pain, and fear of future woes?
How dost thou fare, Venusia?
Ven. I perceive
No alteration; every sense remains
Yet unimpaired. Then, while these moments last,
Let me on thee direct my eyes to gaze,
While unobstructed still their sight endures;
Let me receive thee to my faithful bosom,
Before my heart is motionless and cold.
Speak to me, Dumnorix, my lord, my husband!
Give one kind accent to thy dying wife,
Ere yet my ears be frozen, and thy voice
Be heard no longer; join thy lip to mine,
While I can feel thy last and tenderest kisses.
Dum. Yes, I will utter to thy dying ear
All my fond heart, sustain thee on my bosom,
And cheer thy parting spirit in its flight.
Oh, wheresoe'er thy fleeting breath shall pass,
Whate'er new body, as the Druids sing,
Thou shalt inform hereafter, still thy soul,
Thou gentle, kind, and ever-pleasing creature,
Shall bear its own felicity along,
Still in its native sweetness shall be blessed,
And in its virtue, which can thus subdue
The fear of death, still brave the power of fortune!
But thou begin'st to droop!
Ven. My eyes grow dizzy.
Dum. Keep firm, my heart! [*Aside.*
Ven. A heaviness, like sleep,
O'ercomes my senses—Every limb is faint——
Thy voice is scarce distinguished in my ears.
Dum. Indeed!
Ven. Alas! thou look'st so kindly on me!
My weak and darkened sight deceives me sure,
Or thy fond eye did never yet o'erflow
With tenderness like this.
Dum. I never viewed thee
For the last time.
Ven. Look, look upon me still——
Why dost thou turn thy face away?
Dum. For nothing.
Vet. Nay, thou art weeping, Dumnorix—And wherefore
Wouldst thou conceal thy tears?
Dum. I cannot hide them.
Ven. And dost thou weep?
Dum. I do.
Ven. Then didst thou love me
With such excess of fondness? For Venusia
Do these soft streams bedew that awful face?
Dum. Love thee! Behold, when Albion groans around me,
Yet thou these springs of tenderness canst open,
To wet the cheeks of British Dumnorix.
Ven. Oh, ecstacy! which stops my parting soul,
And gives it vigour to enjoy these transports!—
Once more receive me to thy breast.
Dum. Venusia!
Ven. Thy tenderness makes death delightful to me——
Oh, I would speak!—would answer to thy kindness——
My faultering tongue——
Dum. What sayst thou?
Ven. Cease to grieve——
No pain molests me—every pain is calm——
Support my drowsy burthen to that couch——
Where death—serenely smiles.
[*He bears her off.*

Enter FLAMINIUS, *speaking to the Romans behind the scene.*

Flam. My warlike friends,
Keep back—Our troops on every side advance;
I cannot long controul them. Yet I tremble
To enter there——By Heaven, he lives, and sees me!

Re-enter DUMNORIX, *with his sword drawn.*

Dum. Importunate Flaminius! art thou come
To rob my dying moments of their quiet?
Flam. Forgive the crime of ignorance—Forgive,
Since accident hath joined us once again,
If strong compassion at thy fate yet pleads——
Dum. What! when Venusia is no more?
Flam. No more!
Dum. No; and be further lessoned by a Briton,
Who, since his union with the best of women,
Hath never known an interval of love,
And at this solemn pause yet melts in fondness;
While death's black curtain shrouds my cold Venusia,
Of dearer value doth my soul esteem her,
Than should those eyes rekindle into lustre,
And every charm revive with double power
Of winning beauty, if alone to shine
Amid the gloom of bondage.
Flam. I will urge
No more. Farewell—our legions hover nigh.
[*Exit.*
Dum. Now in my breast resume thy wonted seat,
Thou manly firmness, which so oft has borne me
Through every toil and danger. Oh, return,
Rise o'er my sorrow, and complete thy last,
Thy highest task, to close a life of glory—
They come!—Be swift, my sword—By thee to fall,

Near that dear clay extended, best becomes
A soldier's courage, and a husband's love.
[*Exit.*

Enter ENOBARBUS, FLAMINIUS, *and Romans.*

Enob. To Boadicea's quarter I advanced,
At thy request, who, since her last defeat,
Blind with despair and disappointed fury,
Fled to her tent; expiring, there, I found her,
With one ill-fated daughter, both by poison;
Nor had the friendly Emmeline escaped,
But by the swift prevention of my hand.
Dost thou not thank me, whose suggestion prompted
Our quick return to seize the secret pass?
Thou gav'st me freedom; love and fame repay thee.

Flam. If thou could'st add, that Dumnorix survived——

Enob. [*Looking into the tent.*] Thou seest the gods have otherwise decreed.
Forbear to mingle vain regret with conquest.
He hath done nobly. Fair befall his urn!
Death is his triumph, which a captive life
Had forfeited to Rome, with all the praise
Now from the virtuous to his ashes due.

Flam. Then art thou fallen at last, thou mighty tower,
And more than Roman edifice of glory?
See, too, Venusia, pale in death's embrace,
Presents her faded beauties. Lovely ruin!
Of every grace and virtue once the seat!
The last kind office from my hand receive,
Which shall unite thee to thy husband's side,
And to one grave your mingling reliques trust.
There soon a hallowed monument shall rise;
Insculptored laurel with the myrtle twined,
The well-wrought stone adorning, shall proclaim
His generous valour, and thy faithful love.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

CREUSA.

BY

WHITEHEAD.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.	WOMEN.
Xuthus, *king of Athens.*	Creusa, *queen of Athens.*
Ilyssus, *an unknown youth, attendant on the temple at Delphi.*	Pythia, *priestess of Apollo.*
Aletes, *a Grecian sage.*	Lycea, *and other women attending on the queen.*
Phorbas, *an old Athenian.*	
Priests of Apollo.	*Virgins belonging to the temple.*
Citizens of Athens.	*Guards, &c.*

Scene—The vestibule of the temple of Apollo at Delphi, and the laurel grove adjoining.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Vestibule of the Temple.*

Enter Ilyssus *and Virgins.*

Ilys. Haste, haste, ye virgins; round the columns twine
Your flowery chaplets; and with streams, fresh-drawn
Of Castaly, bedew the sacred porch
Of the great god of day. Already see
His orient beam has reached the double top
Of high Parnassus, and begins to shed
A gleamy lustre o'er the laurel grove!
Haste, haste, ye virgins. From the vale beneath
I hear the noise of chariots and of steeds,
Which hither bend their course; for every sound
Seems nearer than the former.—And behold
A reverend stranger, who, perhaps, proclaims
The approach of some great monarch, to consult
All-seeing Phœbus, or implore his aid.
Haste, haste, ye virgins!

Enter Phorbas.

Phor. Tell me, gentle maids,
And thou, fair youth, who seem'st to lead the train,
Is this the temple of the Delphic god?
Ilys. It is; and on the middle point of earth
Its firm foundation by immortal hands
Stands fixed.—But break we off; the folded gates
Unbar, and, lo! the priestess' self appears!
[*The Pythia speaks as she descends from the temple.*
Pyth. Hence, ye profane! nor with unhallowed step
Pollute the threshold of the Delian king,
Who slew the Python!—Say, from whence thou art,
And what thy business, stranger.
Phor. Sacred maid,
From Athens am I come, the harbinger
Of great Creusa, mine and Athens' queen.
Pyth. Comes she on pious purpose, to adore
The mystic shrine oracular?
Phor. She does;
And with her comes the partner of her bed,
Æolian Xuthus: he, whose powerful arm

Saved Athens from her fate; and, in return,
From good Erectheus' bounteous hand received
His daughter and his crown.—Would he had found
Some other recompence! [*Half aside.*
Pyth. [*Overhearing him.*] Would he had found!
Old age is talkative, and I may learn
Somewhat of moment from him.—Wherefore come they?
Does famine threaten, or wide-wasting plague
Infest the land?
Phor. Thank Heaven, our crowded streets
Have felt no dire disease; and plenty still
Laughs in our blooming fields. Alas! I fear
The childless goddess, who presides o'er Athens,
Has found a surer method to declare
How ill she brooks, that any stranger hand
Should wield the Athenian sceptre.
Pyth. Does from her
The vengeance come?
Phor. I know not whence it comes;
But this I know, full fifteen years have rolled
Since first their hands were joined, and rolled in vain;
For still the royal pair in silence mourn,
Cursed with a barren bed. For this they come,
To explore the latent cause, and beg of Heaven
To grant an heir, or teach them where to fix,
On what selected head, the Athenian crown.
Pyth. And Heaven, no doubt, will hear and grant their prayer.——
Ilyssus, haste, and bid the priests prepare
For sacrifice. You, Nysa, and your sisters,
Amid the laurel grove, with speed perform
The morning's due lustration.
Then hither all return.——Myself, meanwhile,
Will tempt the vice of age, and try to draw
Some useful secrets from him. [*Aside.*
The good king,
Of whom you speak, Erectheus, did his people
Esteem and love him as they ought? for fame
Talked largely of his worth. He was a king—
Phor. He was my good old master; such a king
As Heaven but rarely sends. Did we esteem
And love him, dost thou ask? Oh, we adored him;
He was our father, not our king.—These tears,
At least, may speak my heart.—We must not hope,
In these degenerate times, to see him equalled.
He never did an unkind act, but once,
And then he thought the public good required it;
Though much, I fear, the evils we lament
From thence derive their origin.
Pyth. What act?
What unkind act?
Phor. O maid, 'twere long to tell
The whole unhappy story; yet, in part,
Hear what to me appears too closely joined
With these our present ills. There was a youth,
Athenian born, but not of royal blood,
His name Nicander; him unlucky fate
Had made the lover of our present queen,
While yet a maid. What will not love attempt
In young ambitious minds? He told his pain,
And won the fair, in secret, to admit,
And to return his passion. The good king
Was for a time deceived, but found, at last,
The audacious fraud, and drove the guilty youth
To banishment perpetual. Some say
'Twas by his means he fell, though that my heart
Consents not to believe. Thus much is sure;
Nicander wandered forth a wretched exile,
And, ere few days had passed, upon the road
Were found his well-known garments stained with blood.
Sure sign of murder, and as sure a sign
No needy robber was the instrument.
Pyth. How bore Creusa this?
Phor. At first her sorrows
Were loud and frantic. Time, at length, subdued
Her rage to silent grief. The good old king,
To soothe her woes, consented she should raise
A tomb to her Nicander, and perform
A kind of annual rites to parted love.
Pyth. But that not long continued, for we find
She married Xuthus.
Phor. 'Twas a match of state;
He saved her country, and she gave her hand,
Because that country asked it. But her heart
Is buried with Nicander. Still to him,
And Xanthus' self permits it, she performs
Her yearly offerings, and adorns with flowers
An empty tomb.——Would he had lived, and reigned
Her wedded lord! we had not wanted then
The assistance of a stranger arm to guard
The Athenian state; nor had we then been driven
To search for heirs at Delphi.
Pyth. Stop thy tongue,
Or speak with reverence of the sacred shrine!—
Thy words were hasty, but thy silence now
Makes just atonement for them.—Then, perhaps,
Thou think'st this want of heirs a curse entailed
By Heaven on Athens, for Nicander's death
And Xuthus' reign?
Phor. I am Athenian born,
Nor love Æolian kings, however great
And good they may be.
Pyth. The imperial Xuthus
Is much renowned.
Phor. Is virtuous, brave, and pious;
Perhaps too pious.——
Pyth. How!
Phor. Forgive me, maid;
I speak my thoughts with freedom.
Pyth. What thou speak'st
To me is sacred. Then, perchance, thou rank'st
His journey hither, to address the god,
Among those acts which thou wouldst call too pious?
Phor. For me the gods of Athens would suffice.
Yet do I pay just reverence, holy maid,

To thee, and to thy shrine.
Pyth. Thy zeal for Athens
Is too intemperate. But the train returns,
And interrupts our converse. Say, Ilyssus,
Are they prepared?

Enter ILYSSUS *and Virgins.*

Ilys. They are, and only wait
The approaching victims.
Pyth. By yon train, the queen
Is now on her arrival. Thou, Ilyssus,
Receive her here; while I, as custom wills,
Deep in the temple's inmost gloom retire,
And wait the inspiring god. Ilyssus, hear;
When thou hast paid due honours to the queen,
Haste to Aletes; in the laurel grove,
Impatient I expect him; tell him, youth,
Things of uncommon import do demand
His instant presence. But the croud approaches.
Stranger, farewell. I feel, I feel within
An heaven-born impulse, and the seeds of truth
Are labouring in my breast. Stranger, farewell.
[*The Pythia returns to the temple, and the gates shut.*

Enter CREUSA *and Attendants.*

Cre. No farther need we conduct. Bid the guards
Return, and wait the king.
Phor. Does aught of moment
Detain him on the road?
Cre. He stops a while
At great Trophonius' cave, that he may leave
No duty unperformed. Heaven grant his zeal
May meet with just success!
Ilys. Please you, great queen,
In yon pavilion to repose, and taste
Some light refection.
Cre. Ha! Lycea, Phorbas,
What youth is this? There's something in his eyes,
His shape, his voice—What may we call thee, youth?
Ilys. The servant of the god, who guards this fane.
Cre. Bear'st thou no name?
Ilys. Ilyssus, gracious queen,
The priests and virgins calls me.
Cre. Ha? Ilyssus!
That name's Athenian. Tell me, gentle youth,
Art thou of Athens, then?
Ilys. I have no country,
Nor know I whence I am.
Cre. Who were thy parents?
Thy father, mother?
Ilys. Ever honoured queen,
I never knew a mother's tender cares,
Nor heard the instructions of a father's tongue.
Cre. How cam'st thou hither?
Ilys. Eighteen years are past,
Since, in the temple's portal, I was found
A sleeping infant.
Cre. Eighteen years! good Heaven!
That fatal time recalls a scene of woe—
Let me not think. Were there no marks to shew
From whom or whence thou wert?
Ilys. I have been told
An osier basket, such as shepherds weave,
And a few scattered leaves, were all the bed
And cradle I could boast.
Cre. Unhappy child!
But more, O ten times more unhappy they,
Who lost, perhaps, in thee their only offspring!
What pangs, what anguish must the mother feel,
Compelled, no doubt, by some disastrous fate—
But this is all conjecture.
Ilys. O great queen,
Had those from whom I sprung been formed like thee;
Had they e'er felt the secret pangs of nature,
They had not left me to the desert world
So totally exposed. I rather fear
I am the child of lowliness and vice,
And happy only in my ignorance.
Why should she weep? Or if her tears can fall
For even a stranger's but suspected woes,
How is that people blest where she presides
As mother and as queen! Please you retire.
Cre. No, stay. Thy sentiments at least bespeak
A generous education. Tell me, youth,
How has thy mind been formed?
Ilys. In that, great queen,
I never wanted parents. The good priests
And pious priestess, who with care sustained
My helpless infancy, left not my youth
Without instruction. But O, more than all,
The kindest, best good man, a neighbouring sage,
Who has known better days, though now, retired
To a small cottage on the mountain's brow,
He deals his blessings to the simple swains
In balms and powerful herbs—he taught me things,
Which my soul treasures as its dearest wealth,
And will remember ever. The good priests,
'Tis true, had taught the same, but not with half
That force and energy; conviction's self
Dwelt on Aletes' tongue.
Cre. Aletes, saidst thou?
Was that the good man's name?
Ilys. It is, great queen;
For yet he lives, and guides me by his counsels.
Cre. What did he teach thee?
Ilys. To adore high Heaven,
And venerate on earth heaven's image, truth!
To feel for others' woes, and bear my own
With manly resignation. Yet I own
Some things he taught me, which but ill agree
With my condition here.
Cre. What things were those?
Ilys. They were for exercise, and to confirm
My growing strength. And yet I often told him
The exercise he taught resembled much
What I had heard of war. He was himself
A warrior once.

Cre. And did those sports delight thee?
Ilys. Great queen, I do confess my soul mixed with them.
Whene'er I grasped the osier-platted shield,
Or sent the mimic javelin to its mark,
I felt I know not what of spirit in me.
But then I knew my duty, and repressed
The swelling ardour. 'Tis to shades, I cried,
The servant of the temple must confine
His less ambitious, not less virtuous cares.
Cre. Did the good man observe, and blame thy ardour?
Ilys. He only smiled at my too forward zeal;
Nay seemed to think such sports were necessary
To soften what he called more rigorous studies.
Cre. Suppose, when I return to Athens, youth,
Thou shouldst attend me thither! wouldst thou trust
To me thy future fortunes?
Ilys. O most gladly!
But then to leave these shades, where I was nursed
The servant of the god, how might that seem?
And good Aletes too, the kind old man
Of whom I speak? But wherefore talk I thus?
You only throw these tempting lures to try
The ambition of my youth. Please you, retire.
Cre. Ilyssus, we will find a time to speak
More largely on the subject; for the present
Let all withdraw and leave us. Youth, farewell!
I see the place, and will retire at leisure.
Lycea, Phorbas, stay.
Ilys. [*Aside.*] How my heart beats!
She must mean something sure; though good Aletes
Has told me polished courts abound in falschood.
But I will bear the priestess' message to him,
And open all my doubts. [*Exit.*
Phor. Great queen, why stand'st thou silent? Something seems
To labour in thy breast.
Cre. Alas! good Phorbas,
Didst thou observe that youth? When first my eye
Glanced on his beauteous form, methought I saw
The person of Nicander.
Phor. Gracious queen,
Your heart misleads your eyes. The image there,
Too deeply fixed, makes every pleasing object
Bear some resemblance to itself.
Cre. Lycea—
And yet, though thou wast there, I well believe,
Thy youth can scarce remember how he looked,
When from the fight triumphant he returned
Graced with the victor laurel; such a wreath
As now Ilyssus wears—Indeed, Lycea,
Thy mother, had she lived, had thought as I do.
Nay, when he spake, the voice too was Nicander's.
I know not what to think; perhaps 'twas fancy,
Perhaps 'twas something more.
Phor. Illustrious queen!
You do abuse your noble mind, and lend
To mere illusions of the brain, the force
And power to make you wretched. Grant there were
Some slight resemblance of Nicander's form
In young Ilyssus, though my eyes perceive not
Even the most distant likeness; grant there were,
Yet wherefore should the sight so nearly touch thee?
Casual similitude! we know too well
Nicander left no heir. [*She seems disturbed.*
I say not this,
Great queen, to heighten, but relieve your sorrows,
And banish from your breast each vain surmise
Which fancy might suggest.
Cre. Too well, indeed,
O Phorbas, much too well indeed we know
Nicander left no heir to his perfections,
No image of himself. And yet, good Phorbas,
Blame not my folly, nor demand a reason
If I intreat thee to examine strictly
The fortunes of this young unknown. The priests
Or priestess may know more than they entrust
To his unwary youth. The sage he spake of,
Couldst thou not search him out? 'tis somewhere near
He dwells, I think, upon the mountain's brow.
Thou wonderest at me; call it, if thou please,
A woman's weakness; but obey me, Phorbas.
Phor. You say I wonder; 'tis indeed to see
My honoured queen employ her thoughts thus idly
On griefs long past; when things of dear concern
To her and Athens should alarm her nearly.
Cre. What things of near concern?
Phor. See'st thou not, queen,
Thy crown, Erectheus' crown, the crown of Athens,
Wavering in fortune's power?
Cre. The gods will fix it.
Phor. The gods! Ah, great Creusa, may my fears
Be vain and groundless; but I fear the gods
Have left us to ourselves. When we resigned
The Athenian sceptre to a stranger hand,
We did reject their guidance. Wherefore come we
To Delphi now, but that the offended gods
Have turned too long an inattentive ear
To our ill-judged petitions?
Cre. Why ill-judged?
We asked but heirs.
Phor. We did; for Xuthus' heirs,
The race of Æolus. I know, great queen,
They were to spring from thee; but Heaven permits not
The native pureness of the Athenian soil
Should mix with foreign clay. I wish we find not
More alien kings at Delphi.
Cre. Think'st thou Xuthus
Deceives us, then? His worth, his piety,

Forbid the thought. Besides, the sacred place
Admits not of deceit.
Phor. Credulity
Is not the vice of age. Forgive me, queen,
If I suspect that piety which brings us
To search for kings at Delphi. Might not Athens
Have chosen her own monarch? Her brave youth,
Her bearded sages, are they not the flower
And pride of Greece? Nay, might'st not thou, Creusa,
With liberal hand bestowed the imperial wreath?
And who has better right?
Cre. The gods, who gave it
To me, and my great ancestors.
Phor. Whate'er
The gods bestow can never be resumed,
Though we repent. The pious populace
Will reverence kings from heaven!
Cre. And wherefore not?
Phor. O, queen! perhaps my fears are too officious;
But let thy servant beg——
Cre. I know thy zeal
For me, and for thy country. Rest assured,
Creusa never will consent to aught
Which can endanger Athens.
Phor. My heart thanks thee!
Cre. Meanwhile the youth, Ilyssus——
Phor. Should the king,
Confirmed by oracles, presume to fix
A stranger on the throne————
Cre. He will not do it.
Phor. I hope he will not; yet———
Cre. The youth I spake of,
Wilt thou enquire?———
Phor. Should Xuthus lay aside
His usual mildness, and assume at once
The monarch and the husband, couldst thou then———
Cre. In Athens' cause I could resist them all.
But cease these vain suspicions. A few hours
Will prove thy fears were groundless. Mean while, Phorbas,
Thou wilt find methods to inform thyself
Touching this unknown youth.
Phor. By yonder guards,
The king should be at hand.
Cre. I will retire
To the pavilion, and expect him there.
Yet hear me, Phorbas; let not Xuthus know
Why thou enquirest.
Phor. Xuthus has other cares.
Cre. The priestess too, I would confer with her:
Though that Lycea may perform. Farewell,
And prosper in thy task—Alas, Lycea!
[*Exit Phorbas.*
There is a secret labours in my breast,
But fate forbids that I should give it utterance.
This boding heart was early taught to feel
Too sensibly; each distant doubt alarms it;
It starts at shadows——But retire we, maid.
Grief is the unhappy charter of our sex;
The gods, who gave us readier tears to shed,
Gave us more cause to shed them. [*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Laurel Grove.*

Enter ALETES *and* ILYSSUS.

Alet. SEEMED she disturbed when she beheld thee?
Ilys. Much;
And when I gave her the slight hints I knew
Relating to my fortunes, she dissolved
In silent tears: such soft humanity
Sure never dwelt in any breast but hers.
Nor did I think till now that I had cause
Of discontent; but since she wept my fate,
I seem to find a reason in her grief,
And feel myself unhappy.
Alet. Why unhappy?
Ilys. I know not why: and yet to be confined
Thus to a single spot, to draw in air,
To take in nourishment, to live, to die—
For this was man designed? Ah, good Aletes!
Sure thou hast taught me, godlike man was made
For nobler purposes of general good,
For action, not for rest. The queen proposed
I should attend her to the Athenian state;
Wouldst thou advise it? Dost thou think, Aletes,
She meant I should attend her?
Alet. Doubtless, youth,
If she proposed, she meant it.
Ilys. And wouldst thou
Advise I should attend her?
Alet. Wherefore not?
Ilys. May I desert these shades? Or can I leave
Thee, thee, my good Aletes?
Alet. O, Ilyssus!
Strive not to hide thy heart; from me thou canst not:
I formed it, and I know it. Delphi's shades
Have now no peace for thee; thy bosom feels
Ambition's active, unrelenting fires.
Thou wishest and thou hopest thou knowest not what.
'Tis glory thou wouldst have. Go then, brave youth,
Where virtue calls thee: be the means but noble,
Thou canst not soar too high.
Ilys. My more than father!
Thy words inspire me, and I feel a warmth
Unknown before——But then, my birth———
Alet. Thy birth!
Did I not teach thee early to despise

A casual good? Thou art thyself, Ilyssus.
Inform me, youth, wouldst thou be what thou art,
Thus fair, thus brave, thus sensibly alive
To glory's finest feel, or give up all,
To be descended from a line of kings,
The tenth perhaps from Jove? I see thy cheek
Glows a repentant blush—Our greatest heroes,
Those gods on earth, those friends of human kind,
Whose great examples I would set before thee,
Were once unknown, like thee. And yet, if birth
Concern thee, know, prophetic is my speech;
Thy fate is now at work, and a few hours
May shew thee what thou art—My words alarm thee.
Ilys. They do, indeed. Oh, tell me!——
Alet. 'Tis in vain
Thou wouldst enquire from me, what Heaven conceals
Till its fit time. Didst thou not say, Ilyssus,
The Pythia would be here?
Ilys. She comes.
Alet. Retire,
And leave us to ourselves.
Ilys. I will—And yet,
Might I not know——
Alet. From me thou canst know nothing.
Ilys. A few hours, said you?
Alet. Hence, and beg of Heaven
To prosper the event! Retire, and leave us.
[*Exit Ilyssus.*

Enter PYTHIA.

Pyth. Now, good Aletes, if thy pregnant mind,
Deep judging of events, has ever framed
Such artful truths as won believing man
To think them born of Heaven, and made my name
Renowned in Greece, Oh, now exert thy power!
No common cause demands it. Kings and states
Are our solicitors, and Athens' fate
Hangs on my lips.
Alet. I know it. And now,
If, as thou sayest, my secret kind advice,
And worn experience in the ways of men,
Have gained thy altars credit, and with gifts
Loaded thy shrines, now, by one grateful act,
Thou mayest repay me all.
Pyth. What act? Oh, speak!
And gladly I obey.
Alet. An act, my Pythia,
Which, though at first it may seem bold and dangerous,
Shall in the end add lustre to thy shades,
And make even kings protectors of thy fane.
Oh, Pythia! 'twas the hand of Heaven itself
Which brought these royal suppliants to thy shrine.
I could unfold a tale—but let it rest.
Thou shalt ere night know all, and bless with me
The indulgent Powers above. Only in this
Obey me blindly, Pythia.
Pyth. Say, in what?
Alet. Declare Ilyssus heir to Athens' crown.
Pyth. Ilyssus heir! What meanest thou? 'Tis a fraud
Too palpable.
Alet. I knew 'twould startle thee.
But 'tis because thou knowest the fraud, my Pythia,
That it alarms thee. Didst thou really think
This youth were heir to the Athenian crown,
Wouldst thou not seize the happy gift of chance,
And to the world proclaim it?
Pyth. True; I should;
And bless my fate, that, in these sacred shades,
I had nursed up, unknowingly, a king
For my protector. But what then might seem
The consequence, now seems the cause, Aletes:
Will they not say I made the king, to gain
The kind protector?
Alet. So to thee it seems;
But who will say it? The believing many
Will bow with reverence and implicit faith
To what thy shrine ordains; and for the few
Who may suspect the cheat, true policy
Will keep them silent. Should they dare detect
A fraud like this, and spurn at right divine,
Where were their power! The many-headed beast
Would feel the slackened rein, and from his back
Shake off the lordly rider. Nay, should Athens
Be blind to her own good, the states of Greece,
Thou know'st it well, would arm in thy defence,
And force her to receive the king thou gav'st her.
His form, his unknown birth, his winning softness,
His education here in Heaven's own eye,
All plead in his behalf. And, as he tells me,
The queen already, with unusual marks
Of favour, has beheld him. For the king,
A pious awe and reverence for the gods
Is his distinguished attribute. Thou seem'st
To weigh my words. To clear thy doubts at once,
Know, many days are past since first I knew
Of their approach. Thou think'st I should have told thee.
It needed not. I have myself prepared
Each previous circumstance, and found due means
To forward the event. Thy part is easy;
Behold the oracle.
Pyth. [*Reads.*] "A banished youth is Athens' cause of woe."
How know'st thou that?
[*Looking earnestly at him.*
Alet. Demand not, but read on.
Pyth. [*Reads.*] "For that youth, banished Athens must receive
Another youth; and on the young unknown,
Who tends my shrine, and whom I call my son,
Bestow the imperial wreath The god declares
No more."

Alet. Thou seem'st amazed.
Pyth. I am indeed,
To find thee thus instructed on a theme
I came prepared to mention. The queen's passion,
Her lover banished——
Alet. What thou secst I know
May tell thee I know more. But say from whence
Thou gainest thy intelligence.
Pyth. From one
Whose zeal may thwart thy schemes; a warm old man,
And firm in Athens' cause, who came to-day
Before the rest, and, led by my enquiries,
Gave me those hints, on which I thought to build
Prophetic, doubtful answers. But I find
My best instructor here.
Alet. Perhaps thou dost.
Of this rest well assured, I ne'er had asked
Of Pythia aught but what I knew with safety
She might comply with.
Pyth. Tell me what thou know'st.
Alet. Not yet; 'tis better thou remain in ignorance
Till all be finished. But pronounce the oracle,
And leave the rest to me. Dost thou distrust me?
Pyth. I do not. Yet, if on slight hints alone
Thou form'st this weighty fraud, consider well
What may, or may not follow. By thy looks,
There should be something hid. Thy coming hither
Was much upon the time we found this child;
And since, with what almost paternal care
Thou hast instructed him! Though that, indeed,
Might spring from thy benevolence of heart,
Which I have known is boundless. Say, Aletes,
What should I think? Thou smil'st.
Alet. Wilt thou obey me?
Pyth. I will: and yet, if 'tis a fraud, Aletes,
The warm old man, of whom I spake, detests
A stranger king. Even Xuthus' self, whose worth
He doth acknowledge great, he views with pain
Upon the Athenian throne.
Alet. I know him well;
'Tis Phorbas. Do not wonder at my words,
But find a means that I may see the queen
In secret, unobserved by prying eyes,
And all that old man's fears and rage shall vanish.
He shall with joy receive a stranger king.
Wilt thou devise the means?
Pyth. I now begin
To hope indeed. There is some secret hid
Of most important weight. But does the queen—
Alet. I will not answer thee; my time's too precious.
Only devise some means that I may see her
Quite unobserved by all.
Pyth. You cannot see her
Till all be past. Will that suffice?
Alet. It will.
Pyth. Here in the laurel grove.
Alet. No place more fit.
But, oh, be careful, Pythia, that the king
Observe us not! for 'tis of mighty moment
He should believe this substituted youth
Of race Æolian. To which end, my Pythia,
I have among the priests these few days past,
When they suspected not the approach of Xuthus,
Dropped doubtful hints, as if I had discovered
Some antique marks amid the osier twigs
Which formed Ilyssus's cradle, that denote
He sprang from Æolus. And at the cave
Of great Trophonius, have I taken due care
Such answers should be given, as would induce
One of less faith than Xuthus to expect
An heir of his own family.
Pyth. The boy,
Knows he of thy intentions?
Alet. No, nor must,
Till ripening time permit. His fate depends
Upon his ignorance. Soft, who comes here?
Pyth. It is the warm old man, and, as I think,
Some fair attendant of the queen. Retire;
I would know more, but—Wherefore dost thou gaze
So ardently upon them?
Alet. Hence, away!
We must not now be seen. [*Exeunt.*

Enter LYCEA *and* PHORBAS.

Lyc. This place seems quite retired. Here if thou wait,
I will inform the queen, and her impatience
Will bring her on the instant. Surely, Phorbas,
Something mysterious lurks beneath her tears,
Her strange anxieties. Since thou wert absent,
This unknown youth alone has filled her thoughts;
Of him alone she talks, recounts his words,
Describes his looks, his gestures, loves to dwell
On each particular. Ere thou wert gone,
She wished, and even expected thy return;
Dispatched me often, though she knew 'twas vain,
To watch for thy arrival. When the king
Approached, she smoothed her brow, as if to hide
The strugglings of her mind; nay, seemed afraid
He should suspect her sorrows.
Phor. Then, to him
She mentioned not this youth?
Lyc. Her conduct there
Was most mysterious. With a voice of fear,
She slightly dropped, that she had seen a youth,
Whom she could wish to bear with her to Athens.
The king consented, and, with smiles, proposed
They should adopt him.
Phor. Ha! adopt him, saidst thou?
Lyc. In short, he spake; but at his words a glow
Of sudden joy spread o'er her face, her tongue
Forgot restraint, and in his praise grew lavish;

Then stopped again, and, hesitating, strove
To check its zeal, as fearful to betray
Some hidden transport.
Phor. Whatsoe'er it be,
I soon shall damp her joy. This youth, Lycea,
Must not to Athens—But behold, the queen!
Lyc. Oh, how impatient! ere I could return
To tell her thou wert here, she comes herself,
Eager to learn thy tidings.

Enter CREUSA.

Cre. Now, my Phorbas,
Say what thou know'st at once. The king already
Consents he should attend us.
Phor. Never, never
Shall Athens see that youth.
Cre. What mean'st thou, Phorbas?
Phor. Too much already of Æolian blood
Has hapless Athens known.
Cre. Æolian blood!
Phor. The king consents! I doubt not his consent—
Yes, 'twas my word, great queen, Æolian blood;
This youth descends from Æolus.
Cre. Be dumb,
Or bring me better tidings.
Phor. Worse I cannot;
But what I speak is truth.
Cre. Peace, monster, peace!
Thou know'st not truth. 'Tis thy affected zeal
For Athens, for thy country, that suggests
This horrid falsehood; 'tis thy hate of Xuthus.
Phor. What means my queen? Or, how have I deserved
Such harsh expressions? Does my honest love
For Athens and Creusa subject me
To such unkind suspicions?
Cre. Gracious gods!
It cannot be—alas, forgive me, Phorbas!
I know not what I say; thy words strike through me,
They pierce my very soul. Oh, I had hoped!—
But tell me all; though I believe thee honest,
Thy zeal for Athens, and for me, may make thee
Too hasty of belief. Why art thou silent?
Phor. Amazement stops my tongue; these starts of passion,
This violence of grief, must have a cause.
Cre. Perhaps they have; perhaps to thee, good Phorbas,
This bursting heart may open all its sorrows.
But tell me first, what are thy proofs? From whence
Gain'dst thou this cursed intelligence?
Phor. O, queen!
Thy looks, thy words——I know not how to answer.
Yet if there be offence in what I speak,
My ignorance offends, not I offend.
Know, then, Creusa, from the priests who attend
This Delphic shrine, by your command I learnt
My first intelligence.
Cre. And did they say
This youth was of Æolian race?
Phor. They did:
At least their words imported little less.
They judged me Xuthus' friend, not enemy,
As would thy rage suggest, and as a friend,
Dropped hints they thought would please me.
Cre. Then, perhaps,
It was not truth they spake; they but deceived
Thy ear with well-judged flattery.
Phor. What followed
Confirmed it truth. Has the king mentioned to thee
What promises were given him at the shrine
Of sage Trophonius?
Cre. General promises
Of sure success, no more.
Phor. Know, then, great queen,
As I returned from converse with the priests,
I met his friend and bosom favourite, Lycon.
Joy sparkled in his eyes, and his vain tongue
O'erflowed with transport. I observed it well,
And gave the torrent passage, nay, with art,
Even led it blindly forward; till at length
He opened his whole soul, and, under seal
Of firmest secrecy, told me the king
Would find an heir at Delphi, such an heir
As would rejoice the unapparent shades
Of his great ancestors. At that I started.
He found his error then, and told me, glozing,
That great Trophonius had almost proclaimed,
Though not expressly, Xuthus here should find
An heir of his own race.
Cre. Of his own race!
Phor. So said he. Whether great Trophonius spake
This oracle, I know not; but I know
Too well whose oracle to me declared it.
Cre. Think'st thou this youth——
Phor. Grant it were only done
To try my zeal, why should they try it now,
Unless some close design required that trial?
Yes, mighty queen, I do believe this youth
Is our intended king. But, by yon Heaven,
If it be he, or any other he
Of Xuthus' race, he shall not reign in Athens!
This poignard first shall drink his blood.
Cre. Forbear!
That thought distracts me—Though perhaps 'tis just—
Oh, Phorbas! 'Twas my hope, my wish, my prayer,
That youth might reign in Athens. But thy words
Strike deadly damps, like baleful aconite,
And poison all within.
Phor. What means my queen?
Cre. O, Phorbas! O, Lycea! But first swear
By Nemesis, and the tremendous powers
Who punish broken faith, no word, no hint,

Shall 'scape your lips of all your queen declares.
Both. We swear.
Cre. Know, then—Oh, pain to memory!
I had a son.
Phor. A son!
Lyc. Good Heaven!
Phor. A son!
Cre. Oh, my full heart! Thy mother, my Lycea,
Knew all the fatal process of my woes,
And was their only solace. Phorbas, yes,
I had a son; but, witness every god,
Whose genial power presides o'er nuptial leagues,
Nicander was my wedded lord. That night,
That fatal night, which drove him forth from Athens,
Forced from my swelling womb, ere yet mature,
Its precious burthen. To thy mother's cares,
I owed my life. In secret she assuaged
My piercing pangs, and to Nicander's arms,
In secret, she conveyed the wretched infant.
What followed well thou know'st. Nicander fell,
And with him, doubtless, fell the dear, dear charge
Consigned to his protection. Yet, good Phorbas,
When I beheld this youth, his looks, his voice,
His age, his unknown birth, all, all conspired
To cheat me into hopes. Alas, how fallen!
How blasted all!
Phor. Great queen, my tears confess,
An old man's tears, which rarely fall, confess
How much I share your anguish. Had I known
Nicander was your lord, by earth and Heaven
I would have raised all Athens in his cause,
Nay, been a rebel to the best of masters,
Ere the dear pledge of your unspotted loves
Should thus have fallen untimely. Now, alas!
I have not even one flattering hope to give thee.
Till now, I oft have wondered why so far
Their rage pursued Nicander. 'Tis too plain
They knew the precious burthen which he bore,
And for the hapless child the father died.
Cre. Oh, gods! I feel the truth of what thou utter'st,
And my heart dies within me. Oh, Lycea!
Who, who would be a mother?
Phor. Be a queen,
And turn thy grief to rage. Shall aliens sport
With thy misfortunes? Shall insulting spoilers
Smile o'er the ruins of thy hapless state,
While all the golden harvest is their own?
Shall Xuthus triumph? Shall his race succeed,
While thine (I mean not to provoke thy tears)
Thy tender blossoms, are torn rudely off,
Almost or ere they bloom?
Cre. It shall not be;
No, ye immortal powers! Yet let us wait
Till the dire truth glare on us. One short hour,
And doubt shall be no more. Then, Phorbas, then,
Should he presume to place on Athens' throne
His alien race, nay, though this beauteous youth,
This dear resemblance of my murdered lord,
Should be the fatal choice, by that dear shade,
Which perished as it reached the gates of life,
I will—I think I will—assist thy vengeance—
Soft! who comes here? 'Tis he! how innocent,
How winning soft he looks! whate'er it be,
He knows not the deceit. Look on him, Phorbas;
Nay, thou shalt question him.
Phor. Not I. Great queen,
Resume yourself, nor let this fond persuasion
Betray you to a weakness you should blush at.
Cre. If possible, I will.

Enter ILYSSUS.

Ilys. Illustrious queen,
The altar stands prepared, and all things wait
Your royal presence. From the king I come,
His messenger.
Cre. We will attend his pleasure.
Be near me, Phorbas; I may want thy counsel.
Ilys. She looks not on me, sure, as she was wont.
I will speak to her. [*Aside.*] Permit me, gracious queen,
To pay my humblest thanks; for, by your means,
The king is kind as you are.
Cre. Rise, Ilyssus!
Perhaps you needed there no advocate.
Phorbas, lead on. My resolution melts,
And all my sex returns. One look from him
Outweighs a thousand proofs. Phorbas, lead on,
Or I am lost in weakness.
[*Exeunt Creusa and Phorbas.*
Ilys. [*Stopping Lycea.*] Gentle maid,
Stay yet a moment. Wherefore does the queen
Look coldly on me? Know'st thou if in aught
I have offended?
Lyc. Things of mightiest import
At present fill her mind, nor leave they room
For less affairs. My duty calls me hence. [*Exit.*
Ilys. I hope it is no more; yet each appearance
Alarms me now. Aletes, thou hast raised
Such conflicts here, such hopes, such fears, such doubts,
That apprehension sinks beneath their weight.
Well might'st thou say these solitary shades
Have now no peace for me. Yet once thou taught'st me,
That the pure mind was its own source of peace.
But that philosophy I find belongs
To private life; for where ambition enters,
I find it is not true. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Vestibule of the Temple.*

Enter ALETES.

Alet. WHY should I doubt? It will, it must succeed.
Yet I could wish that I had seen Creusa
Before 'twas undertaken; for, perhaps——
'Tis better as it is. Her part had then
Been difficult to act; now what she does,
Assisting or opposing the design,
Will all seem natural—The Pythia sure
Will act as I directed——Hark! the rites
Should be ere this performed. Why stay they then?
That noise proclaims them finished, and the crowd
Will soon be here—They come: I must not yet
Be seen; the Pythia in the laurel grove
May tell me what has passed. [*Exit.*

CREUSA *descends hastily from the Temple, in great disorder,* LYCEA *following.*

Lyc. Stay, mighty queen;
You know not what you do; your rage transports you;
You leave the rites unfinished, and the crowd,
In wild amazement, gaze on your departure.
Cre. I will not stay; nor will I tamely bear
My disappointed hopes. Oh, honest Phorbas!
Oh, good old man! thy penetrating mind
Saw early their designs. 'Tis to supply
Nicander's loss (Oh, ne'er to be supplied!)
That we must call in strangers to the throne,
And yield our sceptres to Æolian hands.
Yes, ye great shades of my progenitors,
I hear ye call! ye shall, ye shall have vengeance!
Lyc. Whatever you design, conceal at least
This transport of your rage.
Cre. Why loiters Phorbas?
He saw my anguish; wherefore comes he not
To its relief? They fool me past endurance.
Rely they on the weakness of my sex?
Lycea, they shall find this feeble arm
In such a cause can lay the distaff by,
And grasp the unerring thunderbolt of Jove.
Oh, Phorbas, art thou come?

Enter PHORBAS *from the Temple.*

Phor. Now, mighty queen,
Are my suspicions just? Is Phorbas honest?
Cre. As light as truth itself. My counsellor,
My bosom friend!
Phor. Now shall a casual likeness,
If such there be, a semblant cast of features,
The sport of nature in a human form,
Shall trifles, light as these, weigh down conviction?
Oh, queen! from first to last the apparent scheme
Glares on us now. Why were we brought to Delphi,
But that this youth has long been nurtured here
In secret from the world? perhaps the son
Of Xuthus' self, placed here at first to hide
The guilt and shame of some dishonest mother,
Though now applied to more pernicious ends.
Cre. It may be so.
Phor. And why, say why, to-day,
While Xuthus stays behind for oracles
He wanted not, is young Ilyssus bid
To meet your eyes, and win, with artful tales,
Your easy heart?
Cre. Bid! Was he bid to do it?
Phor. I saw the priestess whisper something to him,
Then loud she bid him wait for thy approach.
She must, forsooth, retire to sacred glooms,
And wait for inspiration. Xuthus' gold
Was what inspired the traitress. Yet, good Heaven,
When from the shrine she gave the fraudful words,
With what strange art the holy hypocrite
In mimic trances died!—A banished youth
Is Athens' cause of woe! Too truly said,
Though for a wicked purpose, to allure
Thy easy faith, and lead thee to admit
The fraud which followed.
Cre. Never, never, Phorbas,
Will I that fraud admit. How readily
Did Xuthus, when my foolish fondness asked it,
Consent to my request! Thou heard'st him say
[*To Lyc.*
We should adopt this youth; in seeming sport
He spake it, but even then the insulting tyrant
Couched fatal truths beneath the ambiguous phrase.
Phor. Why should a youth designed for solitude
Be taught the arts of war? He saw himself
The impropriety. Who is this sage
That has instructed him? And why should Lycon
O'erflow with sudden joy, but that he found,
From thy apparent fondness for the boy,
Their schemes grew practicable. Nay, to-day,
When to the priestess' self my honest love
For Athens, and dislike of stranger kings,
Burst freely forth, she chid my hasty zeal,
Commended Xuthus, talked of piety
And reverence to the gods; 'twas to their priests
She meant, their meddling priests, who dare presume
To sport with thrones, to sell their gods for gold,
And stamp rank falsehoods with the seal of heaven!
Lyc. Forbear, you are too loud so near the temple;
Xuthus himself will hear.
Cre. We would be heard.
Instruct me, Phorbas, by what means to crush
This impious combination.

Phor. Athens yet
Has honest hearts. Yes, Phorbas yet has friends
Who dare be patriots, and prefer their country
To Xuthus' kindest smile. Some such are here,
Even now at Delphi. But, illustrious queen,
We must with caution act. The name of Heaven,
Howe'er usurped, adds vigour to their cause,
And weakens ours. We might in secret find
A sure revenge.
Cre. What?
Phor. Death.
Cre. Of Xuthus?
Phor. His
Might follow, but the more immediate cause
Should earliest be removed; the boy.
Cre. The boy!
Why should he die? Believe me, honest Phorbas,
He knows not of the fraud. His every look
Proclaims his innocence. If impious men
Make him their instrument of evil deeds,
Can he be blamed? Bred up in shades, poor youth,
He never knew the arts of base mankind,
Nor should he share their punishment.
Phor. O queen,
They have too well succeeded. This fond passion,
Which their insidious cunning first inspired,
Clings close about your heart, and may at last
Undo us all!——But hark, that noise declares
The finished rites. Retire we to the grove,
And there will I enforce——
Cre. No, let us stay.
I will confront this artful politician,
And shew him I am yet a queen.
Phor. Perhaps
'Twere better to retire till our full scheme
Were ripe for vengeance.—Yet if we remain,
High words must rise, which will alarm her pride,
And fit her for my purpose. [*Aside.*

Enter XUTHUS, ILYSSUS, *Priests, Virgins, Guards, &c. from the temple.*

Xut. [*Coming up to Creusa.*] Thy looks, Creusa, thy abrupt departure,
Affronting to the god himself, and these
His sacred ministers, too plainly shew
Irreverent rage, resisting Heaven's high will.
Nor dost thou want, I see, unthinking woman,
Inflamers of thy folly.—But of this
Enough; behold the youth whom Heaven designs
Thy heir, and mine!
Cre. My heir!
Xut. Thy heir, Creusa.
What means that haughty look? Why, with contempt,
Dost thou behold him? Is he changed, Creusa?
Have a few hours so totally transformed him?
Is all that winning grace, of which thou spakest
Almost with rapture, is that native charm
Of innocence all vanished? Hear him speak,
Hear if he talks less sensibly, than when
Thy pleased attention hung upon his words,
And lent each syllable an added grace.
What hast thou found, or thy grave monitor,
What has he found, which can so suddenly
Have wrought this wondrous change? Is it because
The gods have thought, with thee, that he deserves
A crown? or is it that my will consents?
And therefore thine, proud queen, perversely strives
To combat thy affections?
Cre. We, methinks,
Have changed affections. The calm, steady Xuthus,
Whose equal mind ne'er knew the stormy gusts
Of discomposing passion, now can feel
Indecent warmth, when touched by pious zeal.
Nay, he, to whom the tenderer sentiments
Seemed but the weakness of the human frame,
Now wakes inspired with some unusual softness.
Have oracles the power to raise at once
The kind affections? Or did he conceal
The smothered flame, till, authorized by Heaven,
It might burst out unquestioned?
Xut. Haughty queen,
I understand thee well; thou think'st this youth
A substitute of mine, and darest affront
Yon awful shrine, the fountain of pure truth.
But by that god who bears the vengeful bow,
And whose large eye——Yet wherefore should I strive,
By oaths, to undeceive thee; breasts, like mine,
Can scorn the imputed falsehood they detest.
Nor am I now to learn from what vile source
Thy vain suspicions rise. But know, proud queen,
This youth shall reign in Athens; and yet more
To punish thy vain pride, since thou provokest it,
I do believe him of Æolian race.
Cre. Thou dost?
Xut. I do. A race as glorious, queen,
As Cecrops' boasted lineage. For the youth,
Were I to beg the choicest boon of Heaven
From my own loins to rise, I could not hope
A nobler offspring.
Phor. Hearest thou that? [*Aside to Creusa.*
Cre. I do,
And will revenge the insult.
Ilys. [*Kneeling.*] Gracious queen!
What have I done which should estrange thee from me?
Am I the unhappy cause of these dissentions?
Cre. Kneel not to me, Ilyssus.
Xut. Kneel not to her;
'Tis I am thy protector, and thy friend,
Nay, now thy father.
Ilys. Yet, oh, mighty king,
Permit me, at her royal feet, to pay
My humblest duty. If I call thee father,
She sure must be a mother.
[*She turns away disordered.*
Xut. Rise, Ilyssus,
Thou seest she standst unmoved.

Ilys. No, now she softens!
I see it in her eyes.
Cre. I will, I will,
Be mistress of my soul. Why kneelest thou, youth?
I blame not thee.
Xut. Me, then, thou blamest, Creusa.
I am the object of thy rage. 'Tis Xuthus
Thou think'st unworthy of the Athenian throne.
Cre. Athens might well have spared a foreign lustre,
Secure of fame, had Xuthus ne'er been born.
Xut. Ungrateful queen, had Xuthus ne'er been born,
What now had Athens been?
Cre. Perhaps in ruins;
And better so, than to become the prey
Of needy wandering strangers.
Xut. Earth and Heaven!
This the return?—I knew thou never lovest me,
Yet, witness Heaven, I ravished not thy hand.
Thou gavest it sullenly, but yet thou gavest it;
And I well hoped thy female sense of honour,
Of duty to thy lord, might have secured,
At least, my future peace. Thy tenderer thoughts,
The wife's best ornament, I knew were buried
In a plebeian grave.
Cre. Plebeian grave!
Xut. Fool that I was, I flattered thy vain sorrows,
Indulged their weak excess, and raised, I find,
Imaginary rivals in the tomb:
But never more, Creusa, never more
Shalt thou affront my ill-requitted fondness.
I will destroy that pageant of thy passion,
Tear from that idol shrine the insulting wreaths,
And cancel thy mock worship.
Ilys. Gracious queen,
Retire a while!
Cre. Begone!—Insulting tyrant,
Touch but a wreath that's sacred to Nicander,
And, by pale Hecate's awful rites I swear,
Thy life shall pay the forfeit; nay, the lives
Of thy whole dastard race.——Plebeian grave!
Had that plebeian lived, imperial Xuthus
Had crouched beneath his feet.
Xut. Oh, would to Heaven
This sceptred arm could raise him from the earth,
That thou might'st see how infamous a slave
Thou darest prefer to Xuthus!—Come, Ilyssus,
We leave her to her follies. Look not on her,
She merits not thy tenderness. Away!
If reason should again resume its seat,
We may expect her at the banquet. Come,
All here must be our guests.
[*Exeunt Xuthus, Ilyssus, &c.*
Phor. Curb not thy passion, give it vent, great queen,
And let it burst in thunder on thy foes!
Cre. It shall, by Heaven, it shall!—I thought till now
My griefs were sacred, but this monster dares
Insult even misery itself. Oh, Phorbas,
Forgive me, if my tears will force a passage.
Now, they are gone, and I will weep no more.
Come, faithful counsellor of vengeance, come!
Instruct me how to act, steel all my soul;
Let not remorse, or pity's coward voice,
The bane of noble deeds, intrude to cross us.
Nicander's injured ghost shall aid our counsels.
Say, shall he die?
Phor. Not yet; first be his schemes
Abortive all, his politic designs;
Then let him die despised.
Cre. Agreed; but how?
Phor. Now, at the banquet, may we crush at once
His full blown hopes. The fatal cause removed,
The effect, of course, must cease.
Cre. What cause?
Phor. The boy.
I see thou shudderest at it; but, great queen,
Hear but the cogent reasons I shall offer,
And thou wilt think as I do. For the boy,
Heaven knows, I wish to spare him; but no means,
No earthly means but this, can curse completely
This politic designer. Doubtless, long
This favourite scheme, to place on Athens' throne
His hated race, has laboured in his breast,
And all his hours employed. On this alone
He builds the firm foundation of his peace,
His happiness to come. His death were nothing:
He knows his friends, the minions of his fortune,
He knows all Greece, such is their dread and awe
Of Delphi's shrine, will join in the support
Of this deceitful claim; and that firm hope
Will make him triumph even in death, and laugh
At our too shallow vengeance.
Cre. Laugh he shall not.
No, I will punish home.
Phor. You cannot punish
By any means but this. And know, great queen,
I have a poison of such subtle force,
(Why dost thou start?) of such amazing strength,
Yet so peculiar in its operation,
That it shall seem the surfeit of the feast,
Not we have done the deed. At least shall seem so
To all but Xuthus' self; for he, methinks,
Should know the truth, at least suspect it strongly,
And yet not dare revenge.
Cre. I cannot bear it;
Howe'er we fail in our revenge, my Phorbas,
The boy must live.
Phor. Good Heaven! Is this Creusa?
Is this the vengeful queen, who would not hear
Remorse or pity's voice? Farewell, then, Athens;
Yes, my poor country, thou must sink enslaved
To foreign tyrants. She, who should defend
Thy rights, thy liberties, stands tamely by,
And sees the yoke imposed, nay, smiles to see it:
Thy queen, the last of her illustrious line,
Consents to thy destruction.
Cre. Never, Phorbas.

Do what thou wilt. With this last parting pang
I give him to thy rage. Yet, oh, beware,
I see him not again! One look from him
Would baffle all thy schemes.
Phor. Now, at the banquet,
Will we infuse the draught, even in the cup
Which the king's self presents to his young heir,
In token of election.
Cre. Stay, good Phorbas.
Phor. Already have I, for the just design,
Suborned a faithful slave. Nay, should it fail,
I have a trusty band, a chosen few,
Athenian souls, who scorn to bow the knee,
To any foreign lord; these will I place
At the pavilion doors, if need require,
To second our attempt.
Cre. Yet stay, good Phorbas.
How kindly did he seem to sympathize
With my distress! Nay, almost chid the king,
When his loud rage——
Phor. He had been taught his lesson.
'Twas all design, all artifice to work
Upon a woman's weakness.
Cre. Thinkst thou so?
Phor. I do. But, oh, my queen, be more than woman;
Conquer this foible of thy sex.
Cre. Heaven knows
How much it costs to do it! Go, then, Phorbas,
I cannot bid thee prosper. [*Exit Phorbas.*
Thou knowst what I feel. Haste, call him back.
No, stay——I think the bitterness is past,
And I can bear it now. Lend me thy arm,
I would retire, Lycea. Yet, from what
Should I retire? I cannot from myself!——
Oh, boy! thou art revenged; whate'er thou sufferest
Is light, to what thy murd'ress feels! [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Laurel Grove.*

Enter PHORBAS *and* ATHENIANS.

Phor. THIS way, my friends; at the pavilion doors
Stand ready armed, that, if we need your aid,
You may observe the sign, and crush at once
These vile usurpers on the rights of Athens.
I hope we want ye not. I must be hid
Awhile, lest Xuthus should suspect my presence.
The queen, too, may repent; I'll therefore shun her
Till the deed's done, irrevocably done. [*Aside.*
But stir not till I come—What noise is that?
Retire, my friends; the temple's postern door
Grates on its hinge. Be secret, and we prosper.
[*Exeunt severally.*

Enter ALETES *and* PYTHIA.

Alet. This quarrel was unlucky. A slight breach
Had lent my purpose strength; but wrought thus high
It may defeat our hopes. She cannot now,
With ease, recede from her too rash resolves,
At least not unsuspected. Did she, say'st thou,
Reject thy message?
Pyth. Scarcely did she pay
The decent dues my sacred office claims.
And when I prest her more, with sullen pride
She silently withdrew.
Alet. See her I must.
Where went she?
Pyth. To the shades, which overhang
The Aonian fount.
Alet. I will pursue her thither.
Pyth. It may not be, for now I know thy secret,
'Tis my turn to be prudent. Know'st thou not,
Thou should'st be cautious, nor expose thyself
To prying eyes? I heard her, as she passed,
In broken whispers bid Lycea haste
To Phorbas, and inform that trusty friend
That she would wait him in the laurel grove.
Here, then, thou may'st surprise them both, and crown
At once thy whole design.
Alet. Thou counsellest well,
And I will guide me by thy kind advice.
Oh, Pythia, how did every thing conspire
To give me hopes, that I should place the boy
Secure on Athens' throne, unknown to all
But those whom fate had made his firmest friends!
The very means I used to make it sure,
Have been most adverse to the cause I laboured.
Had I relied on Xuthus' piety,
Nor mentioned Æolus, success were mine;
And let me hope it still. What most I fear
Is the queen's warmth of passion. To which end
I must proceed with tenderness, and hide,
For some short time, Ilyssus from her knowledge.
I have unnumbered cautions to premise,
Which her o'erflowing joy may haply ruin.
The banquet, is it ready?
Pyth. It has long,
In vain, expected its illustrious guests.
The king already has forgot his rage,
And hopes returning thought may move the queen
To equal amity: he, therefore, finds
Continual causes to delay the feast.
Alet. Retire. Perhaps 'tis she; I hear the steps
Of some who move this way. [*Exit Pythia.*
What means he here?
Why art thou absent from the banquet, youth?

Enter ILYSSUS.

Ilys. It has no joys for me. I fear, Aletes,
Thou and the Pythia have most foully played
For my advancement.
Alet. Ha!
Ilys. Where are the parents,
Whom thou didst promise to my hopes? Alas!
I find no parents here, no kind regards,
No inexpressive fondness. Stern debate
And foul dissention kindle here their torch
To usher in my greatness. Even Creusa,
Whose tenderness, I know not how, alarmed
My throbbing heart with hopes, and doubts, and fears,
Unfelt before, even she has taught her eyes
To look with strangeness on me. The good king,
Who yet withdraws not his protection from me,
Seems lost in anxious thought. Unkind Aletes,
Art thou the cause of this? Say, am I sprung
Of race Æolian? For, by Heaven I swear,
By that pure fountain of immortal truth,
I will not brook deceit. I will again,
Howe'er the glittering mischief tempt my youth,
Become that humble unknown thing I was,
Rather than wear a crown by falsehood gained.
Speak, then, and give me ease.
Alet. My dearest boy——
His virtue charms me, though it may prevent
His own success. Oh, happy, happy Athens,
To gain a king like him, whose honest soul
Starts at imagined fraud! [*Aside.*
Ilys. Speak on, Aletes,
And do not, by that look of tenderness,
And murmuring to thyself, alarm me more.
Alet. What should I speak? This very morn, Ilyssus,
This very morn I told thee a few hours
Would shew thee what thou wert; but thy impatience
Brooks not that short delay. It seems Aletes
Has lost his usual credit with Ilyssus,
Even with the youth his anxious care has formed.
Think'st thou, the man who taught thy feeling heart
To start at falsehood, would himself commit
The fraud thou shudderest at? What have I done,
Which should induce thee to a thought so base?
Did e'er my precepts contradict my heart?
Did I e'er teach a virtue I not practised?
—I see thou art confounded. Know then, youth,
I blame not thy impatience, nay, I praise
That modesty which can so soon resume
Its seat, when all things round are big with wonder.
Ere night thou shalt know all; till then, Ilyssus,
Behave as Athens' king.
Ilys. Oh, good Aletes,
Forgive my rashness. Yes, I know thee honest
As truth itself, and know the wonderous debt
I owe thy goodness. Yes, if thou confess
That I have reason for these anxious cares,
Thou wilt permit me still to question thee.
Nay, look upon me whilst I speak to thee.
Perhaps thou hast some secret cause, Aletes,
For all that kind attention thou hast shewn me,
From infancy till now—Why dost thou turn
Thy eyes to earth? 'Tis plain thou hast a cause:
Thou knowest from whom I spring; how canst thou else
With confidence assert, that yet ere night
I shall know all?—Say this at least, Aletes;
Shall the queen's anger cease?
Alet. It shall, Ilyssus.
Even now I wait her here; on what design
I must not yet inform thee. The next time
Thou shalt behold her, thou wilt find a change
Incredible indeed, from rage to fondness,
From cold reserve to tears of bursting joy.
[*Ilyssus is going to speak eagerly.*
—Ask me no more.—Yet something didst thou say
Relating to the cause which fixed me here,
Thy guardian, thy instructor, and——the time
Will come, when thou wilt know it all, Ilyssus,
And bless my memory.
Ilys. Thou weepest, Aletes!
My tears will mingle too.
Alet. Forbear, and leave me.
Yet stay a while, for now perhaps we part
To meet no more.
Ilys. No more! Thou wilt not leave me
When most I want thy care! 'Twas my first thought,
'Twas the first boon I asked of the good king,
That thou might'st be my kind instructor still.
He praised my gratitude, and I had promised
To bring him to thy cottage. He himself
Shall be a suitor to thee.
Alet. Thou hast asked
Thou knowest not what; it cannot be, Ilyssus,
That Xuthus and Aletes e'er should meet
On terms of amity. The smiles of greatness
To me have lost their value. For thy love
I could do much, and to be severed from thee
Pulls at my heart-strings. But resistless fate
Has fixed its seal, and we must part for ever,
How hard soe'er it seem. Thy youth will soon,
Amidst the busy scenes of active greatness,
Forget its monitor: but I must bear,
In hopeless solitude, the pangs of absence,
Till thought shall be no more.
Ilys. Oh, heavenly powers!
Then there is something dreadful yet concealed.
I cannot part from thee in ignorance.
Tell me, Aletes!
Alet. Would I could! But now
It must not be.—Haste to the banquet, youth;
Thy duty calls thee thither.
Ilys. Go, I cannot,
Till thou assurest me we shall meet again.
Alet. If possible, we will. If not, remember,
When thou shalt know thyself, that on thyself
Thy fate depends; that virtue, glory, happiness,
Are close connected, and their sad reverse

Is vice, is pain, is infamy. Alas!
These were the lessons of thy private life.
This I have told thee oft, but my fond tongue
Runs o'er its former precepts, and forgets
Thou now must mount a throne; a larger scene
Of duty opens.
Ilys. Yet the tender friend,
Who should direct me, leaves me to myself.
Canst thou abandon me?
Alet. Would fate permit,
I would attend thee still. But, Oh, Ilyssus,
Whate'er becomes of me, when thou shall reach
That envied pinacle of earthly greatness,
Where faithful monitors but rarely follow,
Even there, amidst the kindest smiles of fortune,
Forget not thou wert once distressed and friendless.
Be strictly just; but yet, like Heaven, with mercy
Temper thy justice. From thy purged ear
Banish base flattery, and spurn the wretch,
Who would persuade thee thou art more than man;
Weak, erring, selfish man, endued with power
To be the minister of public good.
If conquest charm thee, and the pride of war
Blaze on thy sight, remember thou art placed
The guardian of mankind, nor build thy fame
On rapines, and on murders. Should soft peace
Invite to luxury, the pleasing bane
Of happy kingdoms, know, from thy example,
The bliss or woe of nameless millions springs,
Their virtue, or their vice. Nor think by laws
To curb licentious man; those laws alone
Can bend the headstrong many to their yoke,
Which make it present interest to obey them.
Oh, boy!——

Enter PYTHIA *hastily.*

Pyth. Ilyssus! wherefore art thou here?
The king expects thee, and the banquet waits.
Ilys. I cannot go.
Alet. Thou must; thy fate depends
Upon thy absence now. The queen approaches.
After the banquet I again will see thee,
And thou shalt know the whole. I will, by Heaven. [*Exit Ilyssus.*
Pythia, away, and wait me in the temple.
[*Exit Pythia.*
She saw them not; on her contracted brow
Sits brooding care. She speaks! my heart beats thick,
And my tongue trembles to perform its office.
Now fate attend, and perfect thine own work!

Enter CREUSA.

Cre. To what have I consented? Ha! Who art thou,
That thus intrudest on sacred privacy,
When the o'erburthened mind unloads its griefs,
Its hoarded miseries?
Alet. Thy better genius!
Cre. That voice is sure familiar to my ear!
Who art thou? Speak!
Alet. One whom adversity
Has taught to know himself. I bring thee tidings
Of an unhappy man, who wronged thee much,
But much repented of the wrongs he did thee;
Of thy Nicander, queen.
Cre. Nicander, say'st thou?
Oh, then thou art indeed my better genius!
Alet. Now arm thy soul for wonders yet to come!
Perhaps he lives.
Cre. He lives!
[*Looking on him with amazement.*
Alet. [*After great irresolution and struggles with himself.*] Behold him here!
[*She faints.*
What has my rashness done! The blush of life
Has left her cheek, the pulse forgets to move.
Where shall I turn? I cannot call for aid,
Nor can I leave her thus. She breaths, she stirs!
Yes, yes, Creusa, thy Nicander lives,
And he will catch at least this dear embrace,
Though now thou art another's!
Cre. Gracious gods!
It is, it is Nicander, 'tis my lord!
Oh, I am only thine! no power on earth
Shall e'er divide us more.
It cannot be, my senses all deceive me——
And yet it is. Oh, let me gaze upon thee,
Recall each trace which marks thee for my own,
And gives me back the image of my heart!
How time and grief have changed thee! But my love
Can know no change. My lord, my life, my husband!
Where hast thou wandered? How hast thou been hid
From love's all-piercing sight? The bloody ruffians,
How didst thou escape their rage? Or did they wreak
Upon the helpless innocent alone
Their impious vengeance?
Nic. Nor on me, nor him
Did vengeance fall.
Cre. Does he live?
Nic. He does.
Cre. Oh, honest Phorbas! Murder now is virtue. [*Aside.*
Nic. The fabled murder was all stratagem,
Contrived for thy dear sake; no impious ruffians
Pursued our steps: I found that I had wronged thee
Beyond redress, nor knew another means,
But by my death, to save thee from dishonour.
Despair I thought might conquer love, and thou
Once more be Athens' pride. The precious charge
Forbade a real death: I therefore stained
With blood my well-known garments, which produced——

Cre. A cursed effect. But I have nearer fears:
How cam'st thou hither? Wherefore to these shades?
The boy, where is he?
Nic. Far from hence——
Cre. Thank Heaven!
Nic. He lives in peace and safety. What disturbs thee?
Cre. Nothing——I dare not tell him what I feared,
His honest breast might shudder at the guilt,
Though now it be more needful. [*Aside.*] The dear boy,
Say, is he brave?
Nic. As woman could desire.
Cre. And formed like thee?
Nic. His person far exceeds
What my most vigorous youth could boast, Creusa;
And his firm mind is wisdom's aged strength,
With all youth's graces softened.
Cre. 'Tis too much.
Oh, happy mother! Call'st thou him Nicander?
Nic. No, Ion; 'twas the name that matron chose,
Who gave him to my care.
Cre. Then Ion be it;
Ion shall reign in Athens. Know'st thou, love,
The cursed design which this Æolian here,
And the vile maid——
Nic. The priestess, it should seem,
With Xuthus, has conspired to fix his race
On Athens' throne.
Cre. But never shall his race
That sceptre wield.
Nic. It never shall, Creusa.
I have a means——
Cre. My means, thank Heaven, are surer. [*Aside.*
Nic. But I will tell thee all from first to last.
Hear, then, and weigh my words, for fate is in them.
Xuthus, the Athenian king——
Cre. I think not of him.
Nic. Beware of that. Whate'er thou think'st, Creusa,
Xuthus must still reign on, thy lord and husband.
Cre. Xuthus, my lord! then what art thou, Nicander?
Dost thou despise me for a crime thyself
Hast forced me to commit? My soul was thine,
Even when I gave my hand, and still remains
Undaunted, undefiled.
Nic. I know it well,
Thou dearest, best of women. My torn heart
Drops blood while I propose it, yet we must,
We must for ever part. Forbear, Creusa!
That killing look strikes through me. Think, Oh, think,
What in this age of absence I have borne,
How combated each tender thought, and lived
For thy dear sake, a victim to despair.
But now if thou consent'st, all, all is mine,
And I forgive my fate. The dear, dear boy,
I have a means to place him on the throne
Secure as we could wish.
Cre. Secure he shall be;
I will proclaim him to the world as mine,
And Athens shall with joy receive its sovereign;
The tyrant Xuthus shall be taught to fear
A master's frown.
Nic. Thy rashness, my Creusa,
May ruin all.
Cre. I will be rash, if this
Be rashness, to declare to earth, to Heaven,
A mother's heart-felt joy, whose only child,
Snatched from the grave, unhoped for, comes to claim,
With every grace and every virtue crowned,
The imperial seat of his great ancestors.
And shall we want a means?
Nic. We need not wait;
For by my care the important means is found
Already, and no human power but thine
Can hinder our success. I would have hid
The secret from thee till thy wished consent
Had given my purpose strength; but thou defeat'st
My utmost caution, and wilt force me tell thee,
Ilyssus is young Ion!—Ha! Creusa!
What means this look? Good Heaven! How her eye fixes!
What have I done? What said, which could attack
The seats of sense with this amazing force?
My wife, my queen, Oh speak!
Cre. Off, touch me not!
Thou canst not bring relief. Oh, I am cursed
Beyond all power of aid! Thou too art cursed,
And know'st it not! He dies, he dies, Nicander!
Nic. Amazement! Who?
Cre. Oh, had he not been mine,
His youth, his softness, each attracting grace——
I should have staid whole ages, ere in thought
I had consented to so damned a deed.
Tears, tears, why burst ye not? But what have I
To do with tears? Those are for tender mothers.
The tygress weeps not o'er her mangled prey.
He dies, he dies, Nicander!
Nic. Who? Ilyssus?
Speak, speak, Creusa!
Cre. Phorbas urged the deed,
And I consented; at the feast he dies
By poison. Oh, my soul!
Nic. Fly, then, this instant!
Perhaps thou may'st prevent it; as thou cam'st
He parted hence. I knew not to his death!
Cre. I go, I fly.
Nic. Yet stay, thy rashness there,
If fate has saved him, may undo us yet.
The Pythia! true, the Pythia shall rush in
To stop the fatal banquet, and declare
The feast unhallowed; at this lucky moment

She waits me in the temple. Stay, Creusa.
[*Exit Nicander.*
Cre. The Pythia, no; I will myself outstrip
The lightning's speed. Whatever be the event,
'Tis not too late to die. [*Exit*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The Laurel Grove.*

Enter PHORBAS *and* LYCEA.

Lyc. OH, earth! Oh, Heaven! Oh, wretched, wretched Athens!
Phor. Speak on, Lycea; wherefore art thou silent?
Why dost thou lead me to this secret shade?
What mean thy flowing tears?
Lyc. The queen, the queen!
Phor. Say, what of her?
Lyc. I know not; all to me
Is terror and confusion.
Phor. What thou know'st
Relate.
Lyc. She sent me forth to seek thee, Phorbas;
I found thee not, but met, at my return,
Creusa's self. Despair was in her eyes,
With hasty steps she shot impatient by me,
Nor listened when I spake. I followed wondering,
And entered the pavilion.
Phor. The pavilion!
Why, went she to the banquet?
Lyc. Eager went,
Despair and anguish mixing in her look.
But, O good Heaven! how changed was that despair
To inexpressive joy, when, from the crowd,
She learnt Ilyssus had delayed the feast,
And won the king once more to ask her presence.
'Where is he? let me clasp him to my breast,'
She cried; 'I now no longer will resist
'Heaven's high command.' Imperial Xuthus rose,
With transport, to receive her; and loud shouts
Proclaimed the people's joy. When, death to sight!
Eternal pain to memory! the slave
Presents the goblet; 'Fill,' she cried, 'a third!
'I, too, will hail Ilyssus king of Athens.
'But, first, all swear, swear by immortal Jove,
'By the far darting god who here presides,
'And the chaste guardian of our native fanes,
'Swear here, swear all, and binding be the oath,
'Ilyssus only shall be Athens' king.'
Phor. What could she mean?
Lyc. Attentive Xuthus caught,
With joy, the happy omen, and all swore
Ilyssus only should be Athens' king.
This done, I saw her from Ilyssus' hand
Snatch the dire goblet, and to him resign
Her own untouched. The slave, who mixed the draught,
Turned pale and trembled; I, with eager zeal,
Pressed forward, but in vain; she firmly grasped
The bowl, and drank it to the dregs.
Phor. The poison, ha!—I knew her foolish fondness
Would start at murder's name. But wherefore die?
Why turn upon herself her impious rage?
'Twas madness all; or else some new contrivance,
Some fresh Æolian fraud. I care not what.
I yet will blast their schemes. Yes, let her die,
By her own folly perish. Athens still
Survives, and shall survive. I must be sudden.
She, doubtless, will betray me to the king,
And cut off even this last resource. Lycea,
Be secret, and thy country shall be free.
Lyc. Were it not better, Phorbas, first to see her.
Perhaps, some secret unrevealed may lurk
Beneath this shew of unexampled rashness.
She left the banquet soon, and, with the Pythia,
Entered the temple.
Phor. With the Pythia, say'st thou?
Then there is mischief toward.
Lyc. Yet now alone
We may surprise her, for I saw the maid
Quick from the fane return with hasty steps,
As if dispatched on some important message;
Perhaps to find thee out. Sure thou shouldst see her.
Phor. And perish, ha! No, no, my sacred country,
Too much already have I been deceived;
I will not leave thee in a woman's power.
Yet hold, Lycea may inform her of them,
And my designs prove yet abortive. Maid,
Thy presence may be needful.
Lyc. Mine! good Heaven!
In what? Creusa will require my aid;
At least my tears are due to my poor queen
In her last moments.
Phor. Stay, she wants them not;
I know the poison's force too well, Lycea,
To fear a death so sudden. This way, maid;
Nay, thou must go; I shall have business for thee,
Some secret message to the queen, Lycea,
Which thou alone canst bear. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter PYTHIA *and* NICANDER.

Pyth. 'Twas he, I saw him, and Lycea with him.
Sure he should be informed! Thou hearest me not.

Nic. This action of the queen sits near my heart.
Pyth. She bade me tell thee—But why waste we time?
Thou now may'st enter at the postern gate,
Unseen by all.
Nic. Why didst thou not rush in, and stop the feast?
Thy speedy presence there had saved us all.
Pyth. What could I do? The queen was there already,
And all seemed peace and joy; could I suspect
That poison lurked beneath so fair a seeming?
Nic. She breaks through my designs.—Unhappy woman!
My soul bleeds for her, and confusion hangs
On every rising thought. The dear, dear boy!
Where is he? at the banquet still?
Pyth. He is.
Nic. And where Creusa?
Pyth. I already told thee,
But thou regardest not, in the temple's gloom
Retired she sits, expecting thy approach.
We there may settle all.
Nic. I fear her much.
Thou seest her passions are too near concerned
To be of use to us; thy cooler sense
Must here direct us. Doth the poison's power
Affect her yet?
Pyth. Not yet; I would have tried
Some powerful antidote to quell its force;
But she refuses life, and only begs
To see her son and thee.
Nic. I will attend
Upon the instant. But first hear me, Pythia;
Thou seest on what a precipice we stand;
It were in vain to hope we could conceal
The truth from Xuthus; from the rest we may;
'Tis thy task, therefore——
Pyth. What? to own the fraud,
And publish to the king, that Delphi's shrine
Is not oracular? Ha!
Nic. To the king
'Twere better sure to publish the deceit
Than to the world; and, where's the means but this,
To hide it? By Creusa's art thou say'st
He is already bound in solemn oaths
To leave Ilyssus heir to Athens' throne.
Canst thou not add still stronger oaths, or ere
Thou dost reveal the secret of our fate?
Then who shall dare to break them? Shall the king?
Thou know'st his scrupulous piety extends
Almost to weakness. What should tempt him to it?
Creusa dead can frame no schemes against him;
The boy to him alone must owe his greatness;
And for Nicander, never more shall Greece
Hear his forgotten name.
Pyth. It must be so;
And yet——
Nic. What yet? To Phorbas thou with ease
May'st own the truth. He will not start at fraud
In sacred things. But see, the queen approaches,
Impatient of our stay. She changes not!
The bloom of health is still upon her cheek!
Fain would I hope——But hopes, alas! are vain.——
What hast thou done, Creusa?
Cre. [*Entering.*] Saved Ilyssus!
Nic. Thou mightst have lived with honour.
Cre. Lived! good Heaven!
I start, I tremble at the thoughts of life.
Canst thou reflect on what I had designed,
On what I am, and what, alas! I have been,
And not perceive death was my only refuge?
Am I not Xuthus' wife? and what art thou?
O hadst thou seen the torments of my soul,
When in one hasty moment it ran o'er
The business of an age, weighed all events,
Saw Xuthus, thee, Ilyssus, Athens, bleed,
In one promiscuous carnage! Light, at length,
Burst through the gloom, and heaven's own voice proclaimed
One victim might suffice.
For Xuthus honour strove, and mightier love
Assumed Nicander's cause. Who, then, could fall?
Could Xuthus? Could Nicander!—No; Creusa.
Nic. Would thou hadst been less kind!—But, O my queen,
To blame thee now were vain.
Cre. To blame! 'tis praise,
'Tis triumph I demand. He lives! he reigns!
Young Ion lives! young Ion reigns in Athens!
O bring him, Pythia, bring him to my arms;
Let me but pour a last sad blessing o'er him,
And death has lost its terrors.
How now, Lycea?

Enter LYCEA, *hastily.*

Lyc. Mighty queen, I know not
If thy command would authorize the attempt,
But Phorbas, with an armed Athenian band,
Now enters the pavilion, to destroy
The king and young Ilyssus.
Nic. Earth and Heaven!
What say'st thou, maid?
Cre. O let me fly to save him!
Here shall their poniards——
Nic. Rest thou there, Creusa.
Thy embassies to-day have proved too fatal.
My life for his I save him from the stroke,
And on the instant send him to thy arms.
Now, fate, be doubly mine! [*Exit.*
Cre. Off, let me go, I will not be restrained.
They tear him piecemeal!
Pyth. Patience, mighty queen!
What man can do Nicander will perform.
Cre. He is a father only to my child,
He cannot tell them what a mother feels.——
Phorbas was born the curse of me and mine.
I might have known to what his impious rage

Would urge him on, and should have first informed him.——
Gods! must I never know sweet peace again!
Not even in death have rest!
Pyth. Behold, who comes
To bless thee ere thou diest, and cease to murmur
At Heaven's high will.

Enter ILYSSUS.

Cre. It is, it is Ilyssus——
My son, my son!
Ilys. Good Heavens! and do I live
To see a parent melt in fondness o'er me!——
Aletes saved me from the soldiers' arms,
And bade me fly to find a mother here.
Art thou, indeed, that mother, mighty queen!
And may I call thee so? Thou art! thy looks,
Thy tears, thy kind embraces—all, all proclaim
The truth.—O let me thus, thus on my knees—
Cre. Rise, rise, my child; I am, I am thy mother.
Ilys. O sacred sound, Ilyssus is no more
That outcast youth. A mother and a queen
He finds at once.
Cre. But art thou safe, my child?
Hast thou no wound?
Ilys. The old grey-headed man,
Who brought this morn the news of thy arrival,
Had raised against my breast his eager sword,
Defenceless I; when good Aletes came
And snatched me from the stroke. I would have staid,
Unarmed with him have staid, but his command
Was absolute, that I should fly to find,
What I have found, a mother! [*Embracing.*
Yet, oh, queen!
Why am I thus encompassed round with wonder?
May I not know this riddle of my fate?
Why first condemned to pass my infant days
In this obscure retreat? If I am thine,
Thy son, illustrious queen, sure I was born
To thrones and empires?
Cre. Thou art born to thrones,
And shalt in Athens reign.
Ilys. As Xuthus' heir?
Is Xuthus, then, my sire? Forgive me, queen,
I have a thousand, and a thousand doubts——
Can Xuthus be my sire?
Pyth. Forbear, Ilyssus,
Nor press thy fate too far. When time permits,
Thou shalt know all.
Cre. Shalt know it now, Ilyssus.
Not Xuthus is thy sire, but that brave man,
Who but this instant snatched thee from thy fate,
And by that act proclaimed himself a father.
Ilys. Aletes?
Cre. Not Aletes, but Nicander,
My wedded lord, thy sire!—And see, he comes
To bless thee, and confirm the sacred truth.——
Good Heaven, he bleeds!

Enter NICANDER.

Nic. To death, to death, Creusa.
Amid the fray I met the fate I sought for.
All else is safe, and Xuthus now pursues
A scattered few, who fall beneath his sword.—
Where is my boy?——Ye guards of innocence!
How has he been beset, and how escaped!
Where is my boy? for I may own him now,
And clasp him to my breast; no more Aletes,
The sage instructor of a youth unknown,
But the dear father weeping o'er his child.
Ilys. Oh, sir, what gratitude before inspired
Let duty pay.
Nic. I have no time to waste
In fondness now. Hear my last words, Ilyssus,
And bind them to thy heart. Thou still must live
The son of Xuthus. The good Pythia here
Will tell thee all the story of thy fate:
And may'st thou prosper as thou dost obey
Her sacred counsel! Xuthus, too, must know
The fatal tale; but to the world beside
It must be hid in darkness.
Pyth. Phorbas sure
Should be informed.
Nic. Phorbas has breathed his last;
And the bribed slave, who mixed the poisonous draught,
Fell by this hand.—Ilyssus, oh, farewell!
I will not bid adieu to thee, Creusa;
Thy colour changes, and the lamp of life
Fades in thy eye; we soon shall meet again.
Ilyssus, oh!——
Ilys. How hard he grasps my hand!
My lord, my father! Have I learned so late
To call thee by that name, and must I lose,
For ever lose?——Good Heaven! she grasps me too!
What means it, Pythia? the cold damps of death
Are on her.
Cre. Oh! my child, enquire no farther;
'Tis fitting we should part. Lycea, Pythia,
Intreat of Xuthus—yet I need not fear
His goodness; though I wronged him, foully wronged him,
He yet will prove a father to my child,
And from the world conceal the fatal truth.
Oh, I am cold—what bolts of ice shoot through me!
How my limbs shiver!—Nearer yet, my child;
My sight grows dim, and I could wish to gaze
For ever on thee.——Oh! it will not be——
Ev'n thou art lost, Ilyssus!——Oh——Farewell.
[*Dies.*
Ilys. She dies, she dies! Was I, then, only mocked
With a vain dream of bliss, to be plunged back
In deeper misery? Did I but hear
The tender name of child breathed fondly o'er me,
To make me feel what 'tis to loss that name?

Oh, I am ten times more an orphan now,
Than when I knew no parents!

Enter XUTHUS, *&c.*

Xut. Where is this murderess, who, with vile deceit,
Seemed to consent to ours and Heaven's designs,
Only to make us a more easy prey
To her assassins?——Ha, Creusa dead!
And the brave stranger who preserved us all!
Is he, too, dead?——The boy——

Pyth. Ilyssus lives.

And thou hast sworn, great king, that he shall reign
Supreme in Athens. Say, dost thou confirm
That oath?

Xut. I do, by Heaven!

Pyth. Ask here no more.
The fatal tale is for thy private ear.
Retire, and learn it all. For poor Creusa,
She wronged not thee, upon herself alone
She drew Heaven's vengeance. And too surely proves,
That murder, but intentional, not wrought
To horrid act, before the eternal throne
Stands forth the first of crimes. Who dare assume,
Unwarranted, Heaven's high prerogative
O'er life and death, with double force shall find
Turned on themselves the mischiefs they designed. [*Exeunt omnes.*

BARBAROSSA.

BY

BROWN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

BARBAROSSA, *usurper of Algiers.*
SELIM, *son of the deceased prince.*
OTHMAN, *his friend.*
SADI, *friend to Othman.*
ALADIN, *partizan of Barbarossa.*
Officer.
Slave.

WOMEN.

ZAPHIRA, *widow of the deceased prince.*
IRENE, *daughter to Barbarossa.*
Slave.
Officers, Attendants, and Slaves.

Scene—The Royal Palace of Algiers.———Time—A few hours about midnight.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter OTHMAN *and a Slave.*

Oth. A STRANGER, say'st thou, that enquires of Othman?
Slave. He does; and waits admittance.
Oth. Did he tell
His name and quality?
Slave. That he declined:
But called himself thy friend.
Oth. Where didst thou see him?
Slave. Even now, while twilight closed the day, I spied him
Musing amid the ruins of yon tower,
That overhangs the flood. On my approach,
With aspect stern, and words of import dark,
He questioned me of Othman. Then the tear
Stole from his eye. But when I talked of power
And courtly honours here conferred on thee,
His frown grew darker: 'All I wish,' he cried,
'Is to confer with him, and then to die!'
Oth. What may this mean?——Conduct the stranger to me. [*Exit Slave.*
Perhaps some worthy citizen, returned
From voluntary exile to Algiers,
Once known in happier days.

Enter SADI.

Ah, Sadi here!
My honoured friend!
Sadi. Stand off—pollute me not!
These honest arms, though worn with want, disdain
Thy gorgeous trappings, earned by foul dishonour.
Oth. Forbear thy rash reproaches: for beneath
This habit, which, to thy mistaken eye,
Confirms my guilt, I wear a heart as true
As Sadi's to my king.
Sadi. Why then beneath
This cursed roof, this black usurper's palace,
Darest thou to draw infected air, and live
The slave of insolence! Why lick the dust
Beneath his feet, who laid Algiers in ruin?
But age, which should have taught thee honest caution,
Has taught thee treachery!
Oth. Mistaken man!
Could passion prompt me to licentious speech
Like thine——
Sadi. Peace, false one! peace! The slave to power
Still wears a pliant tongue.—Oh, shame! to dwell

With murder, lust, and rapine! did he not
Come from the depths of Barca's solitude,
With fair pretence of faith and firm alliance?
Did not our grateful king, with open arms,
Receive him as his guest? O fatal hour!
Did he not, then, with hot, adulterous eye,
Gaze on the queen Zaphira? Yes, 'twas lust,
Lust gave the infernal whisper to his soul,
And bade him murder, if he would enjoy!
O complicated horrors! hell-born treachery!
Then fell our country, when good Selim died!
Yet thou, pernicious traitor, unabashed,
Canst wear the murderer's badge!

Oth. Mistaken man!
Yet hear me, Sadi——

Sadi. What can dishonour plead?

Oth. Yet blame not prudence.

Sadi. Prudence! the stale pretence of every knave!
The traitor's ready mask!

Oth. Yet still I love thee;
Still, unprovoked by thy intemperate zeal:
Could passion prompt me to licentious speech,
Bethink thee!—might I not reproach thy flight
With the foul names of fear and perfidy?
Didst thou not fly, when Barbarossa's sword
Reeked with the blood of thy brave countrymen?
What then did I?—Beneath this hated roof,
In pity to my widowed queen——

Sadi. In pity?

Oth. Yes, Sadi; Heaven is my witness, pity swayed me.

Sadi. Words, words! dissimulation all, and guilt!

Oth. With honest guile I did inroll my name
In the black list of Barbarossa's friends:
In hope, that some propitious hour might rise,
When Heaven would dash the murderer from his throne,
And give young Selim to his orphaned people.

Sadi. Indeed! can'st thou be true?

Oth. By Heaven, I am.

Sadi. Why then dissemble thus?

Oth. Have I not told thee?
I held it vain to stem the tyrant's power
By the weak efforts of an ill-timed rage.

Sadi. Enough: I find thee honest; and with pride
Will join thy counsels. This, my faithful arm,
Wasted with misery, shall gain new nerves
For brave resolves. Can aught, my friend, be done?
Can aught be dared?

Oth. We groan beneath the scourge.
This very morn, on false pretence of vengeance
For the foul murder of our honoured king,
Five guiltless wretches perished on the rack.
Our long-loved friends, and bravest citizens,
Self-banished to the desert, mourn in exile:
While the fell tyrant lords it o'er a crew
Of abject sycophants, the needy tools
Of power usurped, and a degenerate train
Of slaves in arms.

Sadi. O my devoted country!
But say, the widowed queen—my heart bleeds for her.

Oth. If pain be life, she lives: But in such woe,
As want and slavery might view with pity,
And bless their happier lot! Hemmed round by terrors,
Of every joy through seven long years bereft,
She mourns her murdered lord, her exiled son,
Her people fallen: the murderer of her lord,
Returning now from conquest o'er the Moors,
Tempts her to marriage: spurred at once by lust,
And black ambition. But with noble firmness,
Surpassing female, she rejects his vows,
Scorning the horrid union. Meantime he,
With ceaseless hate, pursues her exiled son;
And—O detested monster! [*He weeps.*

Sadi. Yet more deeds
Of cruelty! Just Heaven!

Oth. His rage pursues
The virtuous youth, even into foreign climes.
Ere this, perhaps, he bleeds. A murdering ruffian
Is sent to watch his steps, and plunge the dagger
Into his guiltless breast.

Sadi. Is this thy faith!
Tamely to witness to such deeds of horror!
Give me thy poignard; lead me to the tyrant.
What though surrounding guards——

Oth. Repress thy rage.
Thou wilt alarm the palace, wilt involve
Thyself, thy friend, in ruin. Haste thee hence;
Haste to the remnant of our loyal friends,
And let maturer councils rule thy zeal.

Sadi. Yet let us ne'er forget our prince's wrongs.
Remember, Othman, (and let vengeance rise)
How in the pangs of death, and in his gore
Weltering, we found our prince! The deadly dagger
Deep in his heart was fixed! His royal blood,
The life-blood of his people, o'er the bath
Ran purple! Oh, remember! and revenge!

Oth. Doubt not my zeal. But haste, and seek our friends.
Near to the western port Almanzor dwells,
Yet unseduced by Barbarossa's power.
He will disclose to thee if aught be heard
Of Selim's safety, or (what more I dread)
Of Selim's death. Thence best may our resolves
Be drawn hereafter. But let caution guide thee.
For in these walks, where tyranny and guilt
Usurp the throne, wakeful suspicion dwells,
And squint-eyed jealousy, prone to pervert
Even looks and smiles to treason.

Sadi. I obey thee.
Near to the western port, thou sayest.

Oth. Even there.
Close by the blasted palm-tree, where the mosque
O'erlooks the city. Haste thee hence, my friend.

I would not have thee found within these walls.
[*Flourish.*
And hark! these warlike sounds proclaim the approach
Of the proud Barbarossa, with his train.
Begone——
Sadi. May dire disease and pestilence
Hang o'er his steps! Farewell—remember, Othman,
Thy queen's, thy prince's, and thy country's wrongs.
[*Exit Sadi.*
Oth. When I forget them, be contempt my lot!
Yet, for the love I bear them, I must wrap
My deep resentments in the specious guise
Of smiles, and fair deportment.

Enter BARBAROSSA, *Guards, &c.*

Bar. Valiant Othman,
Are these vile slaves impaled?
Oth. My lord, they are.
Bar. Did not the rack extort confession from them?
Oth. They died obdurate: while the melting crowd
Wept at their groans and anguish.
Bar. Curse on their womanish hearts! What, pity slaves,
Whom my supreme decree condemned to torture?
Are ye not all slaves, to whom my nod
Gives life or death?
Oth. To doubt thy will is treason.
Bar. I love thee, faithful Othman: but why sits
That sadness on thy brow: For oft I find thee
Musing and sad, while joy for my return,
My sword victorious, and the Moors o'erthrown,
Resounds through all my palace.
Oth. Mighty warrior!
The soul, intent on offices of love,
Will oft neglect, or scorn, the weaker proof
Which smiles or speech can give.
Bar. Well: be it so.
To guard Algiers from anarchy's misrule,
I sway the regal sceptre. Who deserves,
Shall meet protection: and who merits not,
Shall meet my wrath in thunder. But 'tis strange,
That when, with open arms, I would receive
Young Selim; would restore the crown, which death
Reft from his father's head——He scorns my bounty,
Shuns me with sullen and obdurate hate,
And proudly kindles war in foreign climes,
Against my power, who saved his bleeding country.
Oth. 'Tis strange indeed——

Enter ALADIN.

Ala. Brave prince, I bring thee tidings
Of high concern to Algiers and thee.
Young Selim is no more.
Oth. Selim no more! Indeed!
Bar. Indeed! why that astonishment?
He was our bitterest foe.
Oth. So perish all thy causeless enemies!
Bar. What says the rumour?
How died the prince, and where?
Ala. The rumour tells,
That flying to Oran, he there begged succours
From Ferdinand of Spain, to invade Algiers.
Bar. From Christian dogs!
Oth. How! league with infidels!
Ala. And there held council with the haughty Spaniard,
To conquer and dethrone thee: but in vain:
For in a dark encounter with two slaves,
Wherein the one fell by his youthful arm,
Selim at length was slain.
Bar. Ungrateful boy!
Oft have I courted him to meet my kindness;
But still in vain; he shunned me like a pestilence:
Nor could I e'er behold him, since the down
Covered his manly cheek. How many years
Numbered he?
Oth. I think, scarce thirteen, when his father died;
And now, some twenty.
Bar. Othman, now for proof
Of undissembled service. Well I know,
Thy long experienced faith hath placed thee high
In the queen's confidence: the crown I wear
Yet totters on my head, till marriage-rites
Have made her mine. Othman, she must be won.
Plead thou my cause of love: bid her dry up
Her fruitless tears: paint forth her long delays;
Wake all thy eloquence: Make her but mine,
And such unsought reward shall crown thy zeal,
As shall out-soar thy wishes.
Oth. Mighty king,
Where duty bids, I go.
Bar. Then haste thee, Othman,
Ere yet the rumour of her son's decease
Hath reached her ear; ere yet the mournful tale
Hath whelmed her in a new abyss of woe,
And quenched all soft affection, save for him.
Tell her, I come, borne on the wings of love!
Haste——fly——I follow thee. [*Exit Othman.*
Now, Aladin,
Now fortune bears us to the wished-for port:
We ride secure on her most prosperous billow.
This was the rock I dreaded. Dost not think
The attempt was greatly daring?
Ala. Bold as needful.
What booted it, to cut the old serpent off,
While the young adder nested in his place?
Bar. True: We have conquered now. Algiers is mine,
Without a rival. Thus, great souls aspire;
And boldly snatch at crowns, beyond the reach
Of coward conscience. Yet I wonder much,

Omar returns not: Omar, whom I sent
On this high trust. I fear, 'tis he hath fallen.
Didst thou not say two slaves encountered Selim?
Ala. Ay, two; 'tis rumoured so.
Bar. And that one fell?
Ala. Even so: by Selim's hand; while his companion
Planted his happier steel in Selim's heart.
Bar. Omar, I fear, is fallen. From my right hand
I gave my signet to the trusty slave:
And bade him send it, as the certain pledge
Of Selim's death, if sickness or captivity,
Or wayward fate, should thwart his quick return.
Ala. The rumour yet is young; perhaps forerunis
The trusty slave's approach.
Bar. We'll wait the event.
Mean time give out, that now the widowed queen
Hath dried her tears, prepared to crown my love
By marriage-rites: spread wide the flattering tale:
For if persuasion win not her consent,
Power shall compel.
Ala. It is, indeed, a thought
Which prudence whispers.
Bar. Thou, brave Aladin,
Hast been the firm companion of my deeds:
Soon shall my friendship's warmth reward thy faith.
This night my will devotes to feast and joy,
For conquest o'er the Moor. Hence, Aladin;
And see the night-watch close the palace round.
[*Exit Aladin.*
Now to the queen. My hear expands with hope.
Let high ambition flourish: in Selim's blood
Its root is struck: from this, the rising stem
Proudly shall branch o'er Afric's continent,
And stretch from shore to shore. My wayward daughter!

Enter IRENE.

What, drowned in tears? Still will thy folly thwart
Each purpose of my soul? When pleasures spring
Beneath our feet, thou spurn'st the proffered boon,
To dwell with sorrow. Why these sullen tears?
Irene. Let not these tears offend my father's eye;
They are the tears of pity. From the queen
I come, thy suppliant.
Bar. On some rude request.
What wouldst thou urge?
Irene. Thy dread return from war,
And proffered love, have opened every wound
The soft and lenient hand of time had closed.
If ever gentle pity touched thy heart,
Now, let it melt! urge not thy harsh command
To see her! her distracted soul is bent
To mourn in solitude. She asks no more.
Bar. She mocks my love. How many tedious years
Have I endured her coyness? Had not war,
And great ambition, called me from Algiers,
Ere this, my power had reaped what she denies.
But there's a cause, which touches on my peace,
And bids me brook no more her false delays.
Irene. Oh, frown not thus! Sure pity ne'er deserved
A parent's frown! but look more kindly on me.
Let thy consenting pity mix with mine,
And heal the woes of weeping majesty!
Unhappy queen!
Bar. What means that gushing tear?
Irene. Oh, never shall Irene taste of peace,
While poor Zaphira mourns!
Bar. Is this my child?
Perverse and stubborn!—As thou lovest thy peace,
Dry up thy tears. What! damp the general triumph
That echoes through Algiers! which now shall pierce
The vaulted Heaven, as soon as fame shall spread
Young Selim's death, my empire's bitterest foe
Irene. O generous Selim! [*Weeps.*
Bar. Ah! there's more in this!
Tell me, Irene, on thy duty, tell me,
As thou dost wish, I would not cast thee off,
With an incensed father's curses on thee,
Now, tell me why, at this detested name of Selim,
Afresh thy sorrow streams?
Irene. Yes, I will tell thee,
For he is gone, and dreads thy hate no more!
My father knows, that scarce five moons are past,
Since the Moors seized, and sold me at Oran,
A hopeless captive in a foreign clime.
Bar. Too well I know, and rue the fatal day.
But what of this?
Irene. Why should I tell, what horrors
Did then beset my soul? Oft have I told thee,
How midst the throng, a youth appeared: his eye
Bright as the morning star!
Bar. And was it Selim?
Did he redeem thee?
Irene. With unsparing hand
He paid the allotted ransom: And o'erbade
Avarice and appetite. At his feet I wept,
Dissolved in tears of gratitude and joy.
But, when I told my quality and birth,
He started at the name of Barbarossa;
And thrice turned pale. Yet, with recovery mild,
'Go to Algiers,' he cried; 'protect my mother,
'And be to her, what Selim is to thee.'
Even such, my father, was the generous youth,
Who, by the hands of bloody, bloody men,
Lies numbered with the dead.
Bar. Amazement chills me!
Was this thy unknown friend concealed from me?
False, faithless child!
Irene. Could gratitude do less?
He said thy wrath pursued him; thence conjured me

Not to reveal his name.
Bar. Thou treacherous maid!
To stoop to freedom from thy father's foe!
Irene. Alas, my father!
He never was thy foe.
Bar. What! plead for Selim!
Away. He merited the death he found!
O coward! traitress to thy father's glory!
Thou shouldst have lived a slave, been sold to shame,
Been banished to the depth of howling deserts,
Been aught but what thou art, rather than blot
A father's honour by a deed so vile:
Hence, from my sight! Hence, thou unthankful child!
Beware thee: shun the queen: nor taint her ear
With Selim's fate. Yes, she shall crown my love;
Or, by our prophet, she shall dread my power!
[*Exit Barbarossa.*
Irene. Unhappy queen!
To what new scenes of horror art thou doomed!
O cruel father! hapless child! whom pity
Compels to call him cruel! Generous Selim!
Poor injured queen! She but intreats to die
In her dear father's tents! thither, good queen,
My care shall speed thee, while suspicion sleeps.
What though my frowning father pour his rage
On my defenceless head? Yet innocence
Shall yield her firm support; and conscious virtue
Gild all my days. Could I but save Zaphira,
Let the storm beat, I'll weep and pray, till she,
(Bereft of her loved lord, of every joy bereft!)
And heaven, forget my father e'er was cruel.
[*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

ZAPHIRA, *and female slaves, discovered.*

Zaph. WHEN shall I be at peace! O righteous heaven,
Strengthen my fainting soul, which fain would rise
To confidence in thee! But woes on woes
O'erwhelm me! first my husband, now my son,
Both dead! both slaughtered by the bloody hand
Of Barbarossa! Sweet content, farewell!
Farewell, sweet hope! grief is my portion here.
O dire ambition! what infernal power
Unchained thee from thy native depth of hell,
To stalk the earth with thy destructive train,
Murder and lust! to waste domestic peace,
And every heart-felt joy!

Enter OTHMAN.

O faithful Othman!
Our fears were true! my Selim is no more!
Oth. Has, then, the fatal secret reached thine ear?
Inhuman tyrant!
Zaph. Strike him, heaven, with thunder,
Nor let Zaphira doubt thy providence!
Oth. 'Twas what we feared. Oppose not heaven's high will,
Nor struggle with the ten-fold chain of fate,
That links thee to thy woes! Oh, rather yield,
And wait the happier hour, when innocence
Shall weep no more. Rest in that pleasing hope,
And yield thyself to heaven. My honoured queen,
The king——
Zaph. Whom stil'st thou king?
Oth. 'Tis Barbarossa.
He means to see thee——
Zaph. Curses blast the tyrant!
Does he assume the name of king?
Oth. He does.
Zaph. O title vilely purchased! by the blood
Of innocence! by treachery and murder!
May heaven incensed pour down its vengeance on him;
Blast all his joys, and turn them into horror;
Till phrenzy rise, and bid him curse the hour
That gave his crimes their birth! my faithful Othman,
My sole surviving prop! canst thou devise
No secret means, by which I may escape
This hated palace! with undaunted step
I'd roam the waste, to reach my father's vales
Of dear Mutija! Can no means be found,
To fly these blackening horrors that surround me?
Oth. That hope is vain. The tyrant knows thy hate;
Hence, day and night, his watchful guards environ thee,
Impenetrable as walls of adamant.
Curb, then, thy mighty griefs: justice and truth
He mocks as shadows. Rouse not then his anger;
Let soft persuasion and mild eloquence
Redeem that liberty, which stern rebuke
Would rob thee of for ever.
Zaph. Cruel task!
For royalty to bow, an injured queen
To kneel for liberty! and oh! to whom?
Even to the murderer of her lord and son!
O perish first, Zaphira! yes, I'll die!
For what is life to me! my dear, dear lord!
My hapless child! yes, I will follow you.
Oth. Wilt thou not see him, then?
Zaph. I will not, Othman.
Or if I do, with bitter imprecation,
More keen than poison shot from serpents' tongues,

I'll pour my curses on him!
Oth. Will Zaphira
Thus meanly sink in woman's fruitless rage,
When she should wake revenge?
Zaph. Revenge? O tell me—
Tell me but how! what can a helpless woman?
Oth. Gain but the tyrant's leave, and reach thy father:
Pour thy complaints before him: let thy wrongs
Kindle his indignation to pursue
This vile usurper, till unceasing war
Blast his ill-gotten power.
Zaph. Ah! sayst thou, Othman? [*Rising.*
Thy words have shot like lightning through my frame,
And all my soul's on fire. Thou faithful friend!
Yes; with more gentle speech I will soothe his pride;
Regain my freedom; reach my father's tents;
There paint my countless woes. His kindling rage
Shall wake the vallies into honest vengeance:
The sudden storm shall pour on Barbarossa;
And every glowing warrior steep his shaft
In deadlier poison, to revenge my wrongs.
Oth. There spoke the queen. But as thou lov'st thy freedom,
Touch not on Selim's death. Thy soul will kindle,
And passion mount in flames that will consume thee.
Zaph. My murdered son! Yes, to revenge thy death,
I'll speak a language which my heart disdains.
Oth. Peace, peace! the tyrant comes: now, injured queen,
Plead for thy freedom, hope for just revenge,
And check each rising passion! [*Exit Othman.*

Enter BARBAROSSA.

Bar. Hail, sovereign fair! Thrice honoured queen! in whom
Beauty and majesty conspire to charm!
Behold the conqueror, whose deciding voice
Can speak the fate of kingdoms, at thy feet
Lies vanquished by thy power!
Zaph. O Barbarossa!
No more the pride of conquest e'er can charm
My widowed heart! With my departed lord
My love lies buried! I should meet thy flame
With sullen tears and cold indifference.
Then turn thee to some happier fair, whose heart
May crown thy growing love, with love sincere!
For I have none to give.
Bar. Love ne'er should die:
'Tis the soul's cordial: 'tis the fount of life;
Therefore should spring eternal in the breast.
One object lost, another should succeed;
And all our life be love.
Zaph. Urge me no more: thou might'st with equal hope
Woo the cold marble weeping o'er a tomb,
To meet thy wishes. But if generous love
Dwell in thy breast, vouchsafe me proof sincere:
Give me safe convoy to the native vales
Of dear Mutija, where my father reigns.
Bar. O blind to proffered bliss! what! fondly quit
This lofty palace, and the envied pomp
Of empire, for an Arab's wandering tent,
Where the mock chieftain leads his vagrant tribes
From plain to plain, as thirst or famine sways;
Obscurely vain, and faintly shadows out
The majesty of kings! Far other joys
Here shall attend thy call: the winged bark
For thee shall traverse seas; and every clime
Be tributary to Zaphira's charms.
To thee, exalted fair, submissive realms
Shall bow the neck; and swarthy kings and queens,
From the far distant Niger and the Nile,
Drawn captive at my conquering chariot wheels,
Shall kneel before thee.
Zaph. Pomp and power are toys,
Which even the mind at ease may well disdain;
But, ah! what mockery is the tinsel pride
Of splendour, when by wasting woes the mind
Lies desolate within! Such, such, is mine!
O'erwhelmed with ills, and dead to every joy;
Envy me not this last request, to die
In my dear father's tents.
Bar. Thy suit is vain——
Zaph. Thus kneeling at thy feet——I do beseech thee.
Bar. Thou thankless fair!
Thus to repay the labours of my love?
Had I not seized the throne when Selim died,
Ere this thy foes had laid Algiers in ruin:
I checked the warring powers, and gave you peace.
Zaph. Peace dost thou call it! what can worse be feared
From the war's rage, than violence and blood?
Have not unceasing horrors marked thy reign?
Through seven long years thy slaughtering sword hath reeked
With guiltless blood.
Bar. With guiltless blood? Take heed——
Rouse not my slumbering rage, nor vindicate
Thy country's guilt and treason!
Zaph. Where violence reigns, there innocence is guilt,
And virtue, treason. Know, Zaphira scorns
Thy menace. Yes; thy slaughtering sword hath reeked
With guiltless blood. Through thee exile and death
Have thinned Algiers. Is this thy boasted peace?
So might the tyger boast the peace he brings,
When he o'erleaps by stealth, and wastes the fold.
Bar. Ungrateful queen! I will give thee proof of love,

Beyond thy sex's pride! Make thee but mine,
I will descend the throne, and call thy son
From banishment to empire.
Zaph. Oh, my heart!
Can I bear this!
Inhuman tyrant! Curses on thy head!
May dire remorse and anguish haunt thy throne,
And 'gender in thy bosom fell despair!
Despair as deep as mine!
Bar. What means Zaphira?
What means this burst of grief?
Zaph. Thou fell destroyer!
Had not guilt steeled thy heart, awakening conscience
Would flash conviction on thee, and each look,
Shot from these eyes, be armed with serpent horrors,
To turn thee into stone! Relentless man!
Who did the bloody deed? Oh, tremble guilt,
Where'er thou art! Look on me! Tell me, tyrant,
Who slew my blameless son?
Bar. What envious tongue,
My foe, hath dared to taint my name with slander?
This is the rumour of some cozening slave,
Who thwarts my peace. Believe it not, Zaphira;
Thy Selim lives: nay, more, he soon shall reign,
If thou consent to bless me.
Zaph. Never, Oh, never——Sooner would I roam
An unknown exile through the torrid climes
Of Afric, sooner dwell with wolves and tygers,
Than mount with thee my murdered Selim's throne!
Bar. Rash queen, forbear; think on thy captive state:
Remember, that within these palace walls,
I am omnipotent: that every knee
Bends at my dread approach: that shame and honour,
Reward and punishment, await my nod,
The vassals of my pleasure. Yield thee, then:
Avert the gathering horrors that surround thee,
And dread my power incensed.
Zaph. Dares thy licentious tongue pollute mine ear
With that foul menace! Tyrant! Dreadst thou not
The all-seeing eye of Heaven, its lifted thunder,
And all the reddening vengeance which it stores
For crimes like thine? Yet, know, Zaphira scorns thee!
Though robbed by thee of every dear support,
No tyrant's threat can awe the free-born soul,
That greatly dares to die. [*Exit Zaphira.*
Bar. Where should she learn the tale of Selim's death!
Could Othman dare to tell it? If he did,
My rage shall sweep him, swifter than the whirlwind,
To instant death! Curse on her steadiness!
She lords it o'er my heart. There is a charm
Of majesty in virtue, that disarms
Reluctant power, and bends the struggling will
From her most firm resolve.

Enter ALADIN.

O Aladin!
Timely thou com'st, to ease my labouring thought,
That swells with indignation and despair.
This stubborn woman——
Ala. What, unconquered still?
Bar. The news of Selim's fate hath reached her ear.
Whence could this come?
Ala. I can resolve the doubt.
A female slave, attendant on Zaphira,
O'erheard the messenger who brought the tale,
And gave it to her ear.
Bar. Perdition seize her!
Nor threats can move, nor promise now allure
Her haughty soul: nay, she defies my power,
And talks of death, as if her female form
Inshrined some hero's spirit.
Ala. Let her rage foam.
I bring thee tidings that will ease thy pain.
Bar. Say'st thou? Speak on——Oh, give me quick relief!
Ala. The gallant youth is come, who slew her son.
Bar. Who? Omar?
Ala. No; Unhappy Omar fell
By Selim's hand. But Achmet, whom he joined
His brave associate, so the youth bids tell thee,
Revenged his death by Selim's.
Bar. Gallant youth!
Bears he the signet?
Ala. Ay.
Bar. That speaks him true.——Conduct him, Aladin. [*Exit Aladin.*
This is beyond my hope. The secret pledge
Restored, prevents suspicion of the deed,
While it confirms it done.

Enter SELIM *disguised as* ACHMET, *and* ALADIN.

Selim. Hail, mighty Barbarossa! As the pledge [*Kneels.*
Of Selim's death, behold thy ring restored:
That pledge will speak the rest.
Bar. Rise, valiant youth!
But first, no more a slave—I give thee freedom.
Thou art the youth whom Omar (now no more)
Joined his companion in this brave attempt?
Selim. I am.
Bar. Then tell me how you sped.——Where found ye
That insolent!
Selim. We found him at Oran,
Plotting deep mischief to thy throne and people.
Bar. Well ye repaid the traitor.——
Selim. As we ought.
While night drew on, we leapt upon our prey.
Full at his heart brave Omar aimed the poignard;

Which Selim shunning, wrenched it from his hand,
Then plunged it in his breast. I hasted on,
Too late to save, yet I revenged my friend:
My thirsty dagger, with repeated blows,
Searched every artery: They fell together,
Gasping in folds of mortal enmity;
And thus in frowns expired.
Bar. Well hast thou sped.
Thy dagger did its office, faithful Achmet;
And high reward shall wait thee.—One thing more——
Be the thought fortunate!—Go, see the queen.
For know, the rumour of her Selim's death
Hath reached her ear: Hence dark suspicions rise,
Glancing at me. Go, tell her, that thou saw'st
Her son expire; that, with his dying breath,
He did conjure her to receive my vows,
And give her country peace.—That, sure will lull
Suspicion. Aladin, that sure will win her.
Ala. 'Tis wisely thought.—It must.

Enter OTHMAN.

Bar. Most welcome, Othman.
Behold this gallant stranger. He hath done
The state good service. Let some high reward
Await him, such as may o'erpay his zeal.
Conduct him to the queen; for he hath news
Worthy her ear, from her departed son;
Such as may win her love—Come, Aladin;
The banquet waits our presence: festal joy
Laughs in the mantling goblet; and the night,
Illumined by the taper's dazzling beam,
Rivals departed day. [*Exeunt Bar. and Ala.*
Selim. What anxious thought
Rolls in thine eye, and heaves thy labouring breast?
Why joinest thou not the loud excess of joy,
That riots through the palace?
Oth. Darest thou tell me,
On what dark errand thou art here?
Selim. I dare.
Dost not perceive the savage lines of blood
Deform my visage? Read'st not in mine eye
Remorseless fury?—I am Selim's murderer.
Oth. Selim's murderer!
Selim. Start not from me.
My dagger thirsts not but for regal blood——
Why this amazement?
Oth. Amazement?—No—'Tis well—'Tis as it should be——
He was, indeed, a foe to Barbarossa.
Selim. And therefore to Algiers:—Was it not so?
Why dost thou pause? What passion shakes thy frame?
Oth. Fate, do thy worst! I can no more dissemble!——
Can I, unmoved, behold the murdering ruffian,
Smeared with my prince's blood!—Go, tell the tyrant,
Othman defies his power; that, tired with life,
He dares his bloody hand, and pleads to die.
Selim. What! didst thou love this Selim?
Oth. All men loved him.
He was of such unmixed and blameless quality,
That envy, at his praise, stood mute, nor dared
To sully his fair name! Remorseless tyrant!
Selim. I do commend thy faith. And since thou lovest him,
I have deceived this tyrant Barbarossa:
Selim is yet alive.
Oth. Alive!
Selim. Nay, more——
Selim is in Algiers.
Oth. Impossible!
Selim. Nay, if thou doubt'st, I'll bring him hither straight.
Oth. Not for an empire!
Thou might'st as well bring the devoted lamb
Into the tiger's den.
Selim. But I'll bring him
Hid in such deep disguise as shall deride
Suspicion, though she wear the lynx's eyes.
Not even thyself could'st know him.
Oth. Yes, sure: too sure to hazard such an awful
Trial!
Selim. Yet seven revolving years, worn out
In tedious exile, may have wrought such change
Of voice and feature in the state of youth,
As might elude thine eye.
Oth. No time can blot
The memory of his sweet majestic mein,
The lustre of his eye! besides, he wears
A mark indelible, a beauteous scar,
Made on his forehead by a furious pard,
Which, rushing on his mother, Selim slew.
Selim. A scar!
Oth. Aye, on his forehead.
Selim. What! like this? [*Lifting his turban.*
Oth. Whom do I see!—am I awake?—my prince! [*Kneels.*
My honoured, honoured king!
Selim. Rise, faithful Othman.
Thus let me thank thy truth! [*Embraces him.*
Oth. O happy hour!
Selim. Why dost thou tremble thus? Why grasp my hand?
And why that ardent gaze? Thou can'st not doubt me!
Oth. Ah, no! I see thy sire in every line.——
How did my prince escape the murderer's hand?
Selim. I wrenched the dagger from him, and gave back
That death he meant to bring. The ruffian wore
The tyrant's signet:—'Take this ring,' he cried,
'The sole return my dying hand can make thee
'For its accursed attempt: this pledge restored,
'Will prove thee slain: Safe may'st thou see 'Algiers,
'Unknown to all.' This said, the assassin died.
Oth. But how to gain admittance, thus unknown?

Selim. Disguised as Selim's murderer I come:
The accomplice of the deed: the ring restored,
Gained credence to my words.
Oth. Yet ere thou cam'st, thy death was rumoured here.
Selim. I spread the flattering tale, and sent it hither,
That babbling rumour, like a lying dream,
Might make belief more easy. Tell me, Othman,
And yet I tremble to approach the theme——
How fares my mother? does she still retain
Her native greatness?
Oth. Still: in vain the tyrant
Tempts her to marriage, though with impious threats
Of death or violation.
Selim. May kind Heaven
Strengthen her virtue, and by me reward it!
When shall I see her, Othman?
Oth. Yet, my prince,
I tremble for thy presence.
Selim. Let not fear
Sully thy virtue: 'tis the lot of guilt
To tremble. What hath innocence to do with fear?
Oth. Yet think—should Barbarossa———
Selim. Dread him not—
Thou know'st, by his command I see Zaphira;
And, wrapt in this disguise, I walk secure,
As if from Heaven some guarding power attending,
Threw ten-fold night around me.
Oth. Still my heart
Forbodes some dire event!—O quit these walls!
Selim. Not till a deed be done, which every tyrant
Shall tremble when he hears.
Oth. What means my prince?
Selim. To take just vengeance for a father's blood,
A mother's sufferings, and a people's groans.
Oth. Alas, my prince! thy single arm is weak
To combat multitudes!
Selim. Therefore I come,
Clad in this murderer's guise—Ere morning shines,
This, Othman—this—shall drink the tyrant's blood. [*Shews a dagger.*
Oth. Heaven shield thy precious life—let caution rule
Thy headlong zeal!
Selim. Nay, think not that I come
Blindly impelled by fury or despair:
For I have seen our friends, and parted now
From Sadi and Almanzor.
Oth. Say——what hope?
My soul is all attention.——
Selim. Mark me, then;
A chosen band of citizens this night
Will storm the palace: while the glutted troops
Lie drenched in surfeit, the confederate city,
Bold through despair, have sworn to break their chain,
By one wide slaughter. I, mean time, have gained
The palace, and will wait the appointed hour,
To guard Zaphira from the tyrant's rage,
Amid the dreadful uproar.
Oth. Heaven protect thee——
'Tis dreadful——What's the hour?
Selim. I left our friends
In secret council. Ere the dead of night
Brave Sadi will report their last resolves.—
Now lead me to the queen.——
Oth. Brave prince, beware!
Her joy's or fear's excess would sure betray thee.
Thou shalt not see her till the tyrant perish!
Selim. I must.—I feel some secret impulse urge me.
Who knows that 'tis not the last parting interview,
We ever shall obtain?
Oth. Then, on thy life,
Do not reveal thyself.——Assume the name
Of Selim's friend; sent to confirm her virtue,
And warn her that he lives.
Selim. It shall be so; I yield me to thy will.
Oth. Thou greatly daring youth! May angels watch,
And guard thy upright purpose, that Algiers
May reap the blessings of thy virtuous reign,
And all thy godlike father shine in thee!
Selim. Oh, thou hast roused a thought, on which revenge
Mounts with redoubled fire!—Yes, here, even here,—
Beneath this very roof, my honoured father
Shed round his blessings, till accursed treachery
Stole on his peaceful hour! O blessed shade!
If yet thou hoverest o'er thy once-loved clime,
Now aid me to redress thy bleeding wrongs!
Infuse thy mighty spirit into my breast,
Thy firm and dauntless fortitude, unawed
By peril, pain, or death! that, undismayed,
I may pursue the just intent, and dare
Or bravely to revenge, or bravely die. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter IRENE.

Irene. CAN air-drawn visions mock the waking eye?
Sure 'twas his image!—Yet, his presence here—
After full rumour had confirmed him dead!
Beneath this hostile roof to court destruction!
It staggers all belief! Silent he shot
Athwart my view, amid the glimmering lamps,
With swift and ghost-like step, that seemed to shun
All human converse. This way, sure, he moved.
But, oh, how changed! He wears no gentle smiles,
But terror in his frown. He comes.—'Tis he:—
For Othman points him hither, and departs.
Disguised, he seeks the queen: secure, perhaps,
And heedless of the ruin that surrounds him.
O generous Selim! can I see thee thus,
And not forewarn such virtue of its fate!
Forbid it gratitude!

Enter SELIM.

Selim. Be still, ye sighs!
Ye struggling tears of filial love, be still.
Down, down, fond heart!
Irene. Why, stranger, dost thou wander here?
Selim. Oh, ruin! [*Shunning her.*
Irene. Blest is Irene! blest, if Selim lives!
Selim. Am I betrayed!
Irene. Betrayed to whom? To her
Whose grateful heart would rush to death to save thee!
Selim. It was my hope
That time had veiled all semblance of my youth,
And thrown the mask of manhood o'er my visage.—
Am I then known?
Irene. To none, but love and me.—
To me, who late beheld thee at Oran;
Who saw thee here, beset with unseen peril,
And flew to save the guardian of my honour.
Selim. Thou sum of every worth! Thou heaven of sweetness!
How could I pour forth all my soul before thee,
In vows of endless truth!—It must not be!—
This is my destined goal!—The mansion drear,
Where grief and anguish dwell! where bitter tears,
And sighs, and lamentations, choak the voice,
And quench the flame of love!
Irene. Yet, virtuous prince,
Though love be silent, gratitude may speak.
Hear, then, her voice, which warns thee from these walls.
Mine be the grateful task, to tell the queen,
Her Selim lives. Ruin and death inclose thee.
O speed thee hence, while yet destruction sleeps!
Selim. Too generous maid! O Heaven! that Barbarossa
Should be Irene's father!
Irene. Injured prince,
Lose not a thought on me! I know thy wrongs,
And merit not thy love. No, learn to hate me.
Or, if Irene e'er can hope such kindness,
First pity, then forget me!
Selim. When I do,
May Heaven pour down its righteous vengeance on me!
Irene. Hence! haste thee, hence!
Selim. Would it were possible!
Irene. What can prevent it?
Selim. Justice! fate, and justice!
A murdered father's wrongs!
Irene. Ah, prince, take heed!
I have a father too!
Selim. What did I say!—my father!—not my father.—
Can I depart till I have seen Zaphira?——
Irene. Justice, saidst thou?
That word hath struck me, like a peal of thunder!
Thine eye, which wont to melt with gentle love,
Now glares with terror! Thy approach by night,
Thy dark disguise, thy looks and fierce demeanour,
Yes, all conspire to tell me, I am lost!
Ah! prince, take heed! I have a father too!
Think, Selim, what Irene must endure,
Should she be guilty of a father's blood!
Selim. A father's blood!
Irene. Too sure. In vain thou hid'st
Thy dire intent! Forbid it, Heaven, Irene
Should see destruction hovering o'er her father,
And not prevent the blow!
Selim. Is this thy love,
Thy gratitude to him who saved thy honour?
Irene. 'Tis gratitude to him who gave me life:
He who preserved me claims the second place.
Selim. Is he not a tyrant, murderer?
Irene. O spare my shame! I am his daughter still!
Selim. Wouldst thou become the partner of his crimes?
Irene. Forbid it, Heaven!—Yet I must save a father!
Selim. Come on, then. Lead me to him. Glut thine eyes
With Selim's blood———
Irene. Was e'er distress like mine!
O Selim, can I see my father perish?
Would I had ne'er been born! [*Weeps.*
Selim. Thou virtuous maid!
My heart bleeds for thee!
Irene. Quit, O quit these walls!
Heaven will ordain some gentler, happier means,
To heal thy woes! Thy dark attempt is big

With horror and destruction! Generous prince!
Resign thy dreadful purpose, and depart!
Selim. May not I see Zaphira, ere I go?
Thy gentle pity will not, sure, deny us
The mournful pleasure of a parting tear?
Irene. Go, then, and give her peace. But fly these walls,
As soon as morning shines:—Else, though despair
Drives me to madness—yet—to save a father!
O Selim! spare my tongue the horrid sentence!
Fly! ere destruction seize thee! [*Exit Irene.*
Selim. Death and ruin!
Must I then fly? what!—coward-like, betray
My father, mother, friends! Vain terrors, hence!
Danger looks big to fear's deluded eye:
But courage, on the heights and steeps of fate,
Dares snatch her glorious purpose from the edge
Of peril: And while sickening caution shrinks,
Or, self betrayed, falls headlong down the steep,
Calm resolution, unappalled, can walk
The giddy brink, secure—Now to the queen.—
How shall I dare to meet her thus unknown!
How stifle the warm transports of my heart,
That pants at her approach!—Who waits the queen?
Who waits Zaphira?

Enter a female Slave.

Slave. Whence this intrusion, stranger, at an hour
Destined to rest?
Selim. I come, to seek the queen,
On matter of such import, as may claim
Her speedy audience.
Slave. Thy request is vain.
Even now the queen hath heard the mournful tale
Of her son's death, and drowned in grief she lies.
Thou canst not see her.
Selim. Tell the queen, I come
On message from her dear, departed son;
And bring his last request.
Slave. I'll haste to tell her.
With all a mother's tenderest love she'll fly,
To meet that name. [*Exit Slave.*
Selim. O ill-dissembling heart!—My ev'ry limb
Trembles with grateful terror!—Would to Heaven
I had not come! Some look, or starting tear,
Will sure betray me—Honest guile assist
My faltering tongue!

Enter ZAPHIRA.

Zaph. Where is this pious stranger?
Say, generous youth, whose pity leads thee thus
To seek the weeping mansions of distress,
Didst thou behold in death my hapless son!
Didst thou receive my Selim's parting breath?
Did he remember me?
Selim. Most honoured queen!
Thy son—Forgive these gushing tears that flow
To see distress like thine!
Zaph. I thank thy pity!
'Tis generous thus to feel for others woe.—
What of my son? Say, didst thou see him die?
Selim. By Barbarossa's dread command I come,
To tell thee, that these eyes alone beheld
Thy son expire.
Zaph. O Heaven!—my child! my child!
Selim. That even in death, the pious youth remembered
His royal mother's woes,
Zaph. Where, where was I!
Relentless fate!—that I should be denied
The mournful privilege to see him die!
To clasp him in the agony of death,
And catch his parting soul! Oh tell me all,
All that he said and looked! Deep in my heart
That I may treasure every parting word,
Each dying whisper of my dear, dear son!
Selim. Let not my words offend.—What if he said,
Go, tell my hapless mother, that her tears
Have streamed too long: Then bid her weep no more:
Bid her forget the husband and the son,
In Barbarossa's arms!
Zaph. O basely false!
Thou art some creeping slave to Barbarossa,
Sent to surprise my unsuspecting heart!
Vile slave, begone!—My son betray me thus!—
Could he have e'er conceived so base a purpose,
My griefs for him should end in great disdain!—
But he was brave; and scorned a thought so vile!
Wretched Zaphira! How art thou become
The sport of slaves!—O griefs incurable!
Selim. Yet hope for peace, unhappy queen; Thy woes
May yet have end.
Zaph. Why weepest thou, crocodile?
Thy treacherous tears are vain.
Selim. My tears are honest.
I am not what thou think'st.
Zaph. Who art thou then?
Selim. Oh, my full heart—I am—thy friend, and Selim's.
I come not to insult, but heal thy woes.——
Now check thy heart's wild tumult, while I tell thee—
Perhaps—thy son yet lives.
Zaph. Lives! O gracious Heaven!
Do I not dream? say, stranger,—didst thou tell me,
Perhaps my Selim lives?—What do I ask?
Wild, wild, and fruitless hope!—What mortal power
Can e'er reanimate his mangled corse,
Shoot life into the cold and silent tomb,
Or bid the ruthless grave give up its dead!
Selim. O powerful Nature, thou wilt sure betray me! [*Aside.*

Thy Selim lives: For since his rumoured death,
I saw him at Oran.
Zaph. Ye heavenly powers!—
Didst thou not say, thou saw'st my son expire?
Didst not even now relate his dying words?
Selim. It was an honest falsehood, meant to prove
Zaphira's unstained virtue.
Zaph. Why—but Othman—
Othman affirmed, that my poor son was dead:
And I have heard, the murderer is come,
In triumph o'er his dear and innocent blood.
Selim. I am that murderer.—Beneath this guise,
I spread the abortive tale of Selim's death,
And haply won the tyrant's confidence.
Hence gained access: and from thy Selim tell thee,
Selim yet lives, and honours all thy virtues.
Zaph. O generous youth! who art thou?—From what clime
Comes such exalted virtue, as dares give
A pause to griefs like mine?—As dares approach,
And prop the ruin tottering on its base,
Which selfish caution shuns?—Oh say—who art thou?
Selim. A friendless youth, self-banished with thy son;
Long his companion in distress and danger:
One who revered thy worth in prosperous days,
And more reveres thy virtue in distress.
Zaph. O gentle stranger—Mock not my woes,
But tell me truly,—does my Selim live?
Selim. He does, by Heaven!
Zaph. O generous Heaven! thou at length o'erpayest
My bitterest pangs, if my dear Selim lives!
And does he still remember
His father's wrongs, and mine?
Selim. He bade me tell thee,
That, in his heart, indelibly are stamped
His father's wrongs, and thine: that he but waits
'Till awful justice may unsheath her sword,
And lust and murder tremble at her frown!
That, till the arrival of that happy hour,
Deep in his soul the hidden fire shall glow,
And his breast labour with the great revenge!
Zaph. Eternal blessings crown my virtuous son!
I feel my heart revive. Here, peace once more
Begins to dawn.
Selim. Much honoured queen, farewell.
Zaph. Not yet—not yet—indulge a mother's love!
In thee, the kind companion of his griefs,
Methinks I see my Selim stand before me.
Depart not yet. A thousand fond requests
Crowd on my mind. Wishes, and prayers, and tears,
Are all I have to give. O bear him these!
Selim. Take comfort then; for know, thy son, o'erjoyed
To rescue thee, would bleed at every vein!——
Bid her, he said, yet hope we may be blest!
Bid her remember, that the ways of Heaven,
Though dark, are just: that oft some guardian power
Attends, unseen, to save the innocent!
But if high Heaven decrees our fall, Oh bid her
Firmly to wait the stroke, prepared alike
To live or die! and then he wept as I do.
Zaph. Eternal blessings crown my virtuous son!
O righteous Heaven! thou hast at length o'erpayed
My bitterest pangs; if my dear Selim lives,
And lives for me!—hear my departing prayer:
[*Kneels.*
O spare my son!—Protect his tender years!
Be thou his guide through dangers and distress!
Soften the rigours of his cruel exile,
And lead him to his throne!—When I am gone,
Bless thou his peaceful reign! Oh, early bless him
With the sweet pledges of connubial love;
That he may win his virtue's just reward,
And taste the raptures which a parent's heart
Reaps from a child like him! not for myself—
But my dear son—accept my parting tears!
[*Exit Zaphira.*
Selim. Now, swelling heart,
Indulge the luxury of grief! flow tears!
And rain down transport in the shape of sorrow!
Yes, I have soothed her woes; have found her noble:
And to have given this respite to her pangs,
O'erpays all pain and peril.—Powerful virtue!
How infinite thy joys, when even thy griefs
Are pleasing!—Thou, superior to the frowns
Of fate, can'st pour thy sunshine o'er the soul,
And brighten woe to rapture!

Enter OTHMAN *and* SADI.

Honoured friends!
How goes the night?
Sadi. 'Tis well-nigh midnight.
Oth. What—In tears, my prince?
Selim. But tears of joy: for I have seen Zaphira,
And poured the balm of peace into her breast:
Think not these tears unnerve me, valiant friends;
They have but harmonized my soul; and waked
All that is man within me, to disdain
Peril, or death.—What tidings from the city?
Sadi. All, all is ready. Our confederate friends
Burn with impatience, till the hour arrive.
Selim. What is the signal of the appointed hour?
Sadi. The midnight watch gives signal of our meeting;
And when the second watch of night is rung,
The work of death begins.
Selim. Speed, speed ye minutes!
Now let the rising whirlwind shake Algiers,

And justice guide the storm! Scarce two hours hence——
Sadi. Scarce more than one.
Selim. Oh, as ye love my life,
Let your zeal hasten on the great event!
The tyrant's daughter found, and knew me here,
And half suspects the cause.
Oth. Too daring prince,
Retire with us! her fears will sure betray thee!
Selim. What! leave my helpless mother here, a prey
To cruelty and lust—I'll perish first:
This very night the tyrant threatens violence:
I'll watch his steps; I'll haunt him through the palace;
And should he meditate a deed so vile,
I'll hover o'er him, like an unseen pestilence,
And blast him in his guilt!
Sadi. Intrepid prince!
Worthy of empire!—Yet accept my life,
My worthless life: do thou retire with Othman;
I will protect Zaphira.
Selim. Think'st thou, Sadi,
That, when the trying hour of peril comes,
Selim will shrink into a common man!
Worthless were he to rule, who dares not claim
Pre-eminence in danger. Urge no more;
Here shall my station be: and if I fall,
O friends, let me have vengeance!—Tell me, now,
Where is the tyrant?
Oth. Revelling at the banquet.
Selim. 'Tis good. Now, tell me how our powers are destined?
Sadi. Near every port, a secret band is posted:
By these the watchful centinels must perish:
The rest is easy: for the glutted troops
Lie drowned in sleep; the dagger's cheapest prey.
Almanzor, with his friends, will circle round
The avenues of the palace. Othman and I
Will join our brave confederates (all sworn
To conquer or to die), and burst the gates
Of this foul den. Then tremble, Barbarossa!
Selim. Oh, how the approach of this great hour
Fires all my soul! but, valiant friends, I charge you,
Reserve the murderer to my just revenge!
My poignard claims his blood.
Oth. Forgive me, prince!
Forgive my doubts!——Think—should the fair Irene——
Selim. Thy doubts are vain. I would not spare the tyrant,
Though the sweet maid lay weeping at my feet;
Nay, should he fall by any hand but mine,
By Heaven, I'd think my honoured father's blood
Scarce half revenged! My love, indeed, is strong!
But love shall yield to justice.
Sadi. Gallant prince!
Bravely resolved!
Selim. But is the city quiet?
Sadi. All, all is hushed. Throughout the empty streets,
Nor voice, nor sound. As if the inhabitants,
Like the presaging herds, that seek the covert
Ere the loud thunder rolls, had inly felt
And shunned the impending uproar.
Oth. There is a solemn horror in the night, too,
That pleases me: a general pause through nature:
The winds are hushed——
Sadi. And, as I passed the beach,
The lazy billow scarce could lash the shore:
No star peeps through the firmament of heaven—
Selim. And, lo! where eastward, o'er the sullen wave,
The waning moon, deprived of half her orb,
Rises in blood: her beam, well-nigh extinct,
Faintly contends with darkness—— [*Bell tolls.*
Hark!—what meant
That tolling bell?
Oth. It rings the midnight watch.
Sadi. This was the signal——
Come, Othman, we are called: the passing minutes
Chide our delay; brave Othman, let us hence.
Selim. One last embrace!—nor doubt, but, crowned with glory,
We soon shall meet again. But, oh, remember,
Amid the tumult's rage, remember mercy!
Stain not a righteous cause with guiltless blood!
Warn our brave friends, that we unsheath the sword,
Not to destroy, but save! nor let blind zeal,
Or wanton cruelty, e'er turn its edge
On age or innocence! or bid us strike
Where the most pitying angel in the skies,
That now looks on us from his blest abode,
Would wish that we should spare.
Oth. So may we prosper,
As mercy shall direct us!
Selim. Farewell, friends!
Sadi. Intrepid prince, farewell!
[*Exeunt Othman and Sadi.*
Selim. Now sleep and silence
Brood o'er the city.—The devoted centinel
Now takes his lonely stand; and idly dreams
Of that to-morrow he shall never see!
In this dread interval, O busy thought,
From outward things descend into thyself!
Search deep my heart! bring with thee awful conscience,
And firm resolve! that, in the approaching hour
Of blood and horror, I may stand unmoved;
Nor fear to strike where justice calls, nor dare
To strike where she forbids!—Why bear I, then,
This dark, insidious dagger?—'Tis the badge
Of vile assassins; of the coward hand
That dares not meet its foe.—Detested thought!
Yet—as foul lust and murder, though on thrones
Triumphant, still retain their hell-born quality;
So justice, groaning beneath countless wrongs,
Quits not her spotless and celestial nature;
But, in the unhallowed murderer's disguise,
Can sanctify this steel!
Then be it so:—Witness, ye powers of Heaven,

That not from you, but from the murderer's eye,
I wrap myself in night!—To you I stand
Revealed in noon-tide day!—Oh, could I arm
My hand with power! then, like to you, arrayed
In storm and fire, my swift avenging thunder
Should blast this tyrant. But since fate denies
That privilege, I'll seize on what it gives:
Like the deep-caverned earthquake, burst beneath him,
And whelm his throne, his empire, and himself,
In one prodigious ruin! [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter IRENE *and* ALADIN.

Irene. But didst thou tell him, Aladin, my fears
Brook no delay?
Ala. I did.
Irene. Why comes he not?
Oh, what a dreadful dream!—'Twas surely more
Than troubled fancy: never was my soul
Shook with such hideous phantoms!—Still he lingers!
Return, return: and tell him that his daughter
Dies, till she warn him of his threatening ruin!
Ala. Behold, he comes! [*Exit Aladin.*

Enter BARBAROSSA *and Guards.*

Bar. Thou bane of all my joys!
Some gloomy planet surely ruled thy birth!
Even now thy ill-timed fear suspends the banquet,
And damps the festal hour.
Irene. Forgive my fear!
Bar. What fear, what phantom hath possessed thy brain?
Irene. Oh, guard thee from the terrors of this night;
For terrors lurk unseen!——
Bar. What terror?—speak!
Wouldst thou unman me into female weakness?
Say what thou dread'st, and why! I have a soul
To meet the blackest dangers undismayed.
Irene. Let not my father check, with stern rebuke,
The warning voice of nature. For even now,
Retired to rest, soon as I closed mine eyes,
A horrid vision rose—Methought I saw
Young Selim rising from the silent tomb:
Mangled and bloody was his corse; his hair
Clotted with gore; his glaring eyes on fire!
Dreadful he shook a dagger in his hand!
By some mysterious power he rose in air.
When, lo! at his command, this yawning roof
Was cleft in twain, and gave the phantom entrance!
Swift he descended, with terrific brow,
Rushed on my guardless father at the banquet,
And plunged his furious dagger in thy breast!
Bar. Wouldst thou appal me by a brain-sick vision?
Get thee to rest!—Sleep but as sound till morn,
As Selim in his grave shall sleep for ever,
And then no haggard dreams shall ride thy fancy!
Irene. Yet hear me, dearest father!
Bar. To the couch!
Provoke me not.——
Irene. What shall I say to move him?
Merciful Heaven, instruct me what to do!

Enter ALADIN.

Bar. What mean thy looks?—Why dost thou gaze so wildly?
Ala. I hasted to inform thee, that even now,
Rounding the watch, I met the brave Abdalla,
Breathless, with tidings of a rumour dark,
Which runs throughout the city, that young Selim
Is yet alive——
Bar. May plagues consume the tongue
That broached the falsehood!—'Tis not possible——
——What did he tell thee further?
Ala. More he said not;
Save only, that the spreading rumour waked
A spirit of revolt.
Irene. O, gracious father!
Bar. The rumour's false——And yet your coward fears
Infect me!—What!—shall I be terrified
By midnight visions?—Can the troubled brain
Of sleep out-stretch the reason's waking eye?
I'll not believe it.
Ala. But this gathering rumour——
Think but on that, my lord!
Bar. Infernal darkness
Swallow the slave that raised it!—Yet I'll do
What caution dictates.—Hark thee, Aladin—
Slave, hear my will.——See that the watch be doubled——
Find out this stranger Achmet, and forthwith
Let him be brought before me.
Irene. O my father!
I do conjure thee, as thou lov'st thy life,
Retire, and trust thee to thy faithful guards——
See not this Achmet!
Bar. Not see him?—Death and torment!—
Think'st thou I fear a single arm that's mortal?
Not see him!—Forthwith bring the slave before me.——
If he prove false—If hated Selim live,
I'll heap such vengeance on him——
Irene. Mercy! mercy!
Bar. Mercy!—To whom?
Irene. To me—and to thyself——
To him—to all.—Thou think'st I rave; yet true
My visions are, as ever prophet uttered,
When Heaven inspires his tongue!

Bar. Ne'er did the moon-struck madman rave with dreams
More wild than thine!—Get thee to rest, e'er yet
Thy folly wakes my rage!—Call Achmet hither.
Irene. Thus prostrate on my knees——O see him not!
Selim is dead.—Indeed the rumour's false;
There is no danger near:—Or, if there be,
Achmet is innocent!
Bar. Off, frantic wretch!
This ideot-dream hath turned her brain to madness!
Hence to thy chamber, till returning reason
Hath calmed this tempest.—On thy duty hence!
Irene. Yet hear the voice of caution!—Cruel fate!
What have I done!—Heaven shield my dearest father!
Heaven shield the innocent!—Undone Irene!
Whate'er the event, thy doom is misery!
[*Exit Irene.*
Bar. Her words are wrapt in darkness. Aladin,
Forthwith send Achmet hither. Mark him well,
His countenance and gesture—Then, with speed,
Double the centinels. [*Exit Aladin.*
Infernal guilt!
How dost thou rise in every hideous shape,
Of rage and doubt, suspicion, and despair,
To rend my soul! more wretched far than they
Made wretched by my crimes! Why did I not
Repent, while yet my crimes were delible!
Ere they had struck their colours through my soul,
As black as night or hell! 'Tis now too late!—
Hence, then, ye vain repinings! Take me all,
Unfeeling guilt! O banish, if thou canst,
This fell remorse, and every fruitless fear!
Be this my glory—to be great in evil!
To combat my own heart, and, scorning conscience,
Rise to exalted crimes!

Enter SELIM.

Come hither, slave:
Hear me, and tremble: Art thou what thou seem'st?
Selim. Ha!
Bar. Dost thou pause! By hell, the slave's confounded!
Selim. That Barbarossa should suspect my truth!
Bar. Take heed! for, by the hovering powers of vengeance,
If I do find thee treacherous, I will doom thee
To death and torment, such as human thought
Ne'er yet conceived! Thou comest beneath the guise
Of Selim's murderer. Now, tell me: Is not
That Selim yet alive?
Selim. Selim alive!
Bar. Perdition on thee! dost thou echo me!
Answer me quick, or die! [*Draws his dagger.*
Selim. Yes, freely strike—
Already hast thou given the fatal wound,
And pierced my heart with thy unkind suspicion!
Oh, could my dagger find a tongue, to tell
How deep it drank his blood!—But since thy doubt
Thus wrongs my zeal,—Behold my breast—strike here——
For bold is innocence.
Bar. I scorn the task. [*Puts up his dagger.*
Time shall decide thy doom. Guards! mark me well.
See that ye watch the motions of the slave:
And if he meditates to escape your eye,
Let your good sabres cleave him to the chine.
Selim. I yield me to thy will, and when thou knowest
That Selim lives, or seest his hated face,
Then wreak thy vengeance on me.
Bar. Bear him hence.
Yet, on your lives, await me within call.
I will have deeper inquisition made;
Haply some witness may confront the slave,
And drag to light his falsehood.
[*Exeunt Selim and guards.*
Call Zaphira. [*Exit a Slave.*
If Selim lives—then what is Barbarossa?
My throne's a bubble, that but floats in air,
Till marriage-rites declare Zaphira mine.
Fool that I am! to wait the weak effects
Of slow persuasion, when unbounded power
Can give me all I wish! Slave, hear my will;
Fly! bid the priest prepare the marriage-rites:
Let incense rise to Heaven; and choral songs
Attend Zaphira to the nuptial. [*Exit Slave.*
I will not brook delay. By love and vengeance,
This hour decides her fate!

Enter ZAPHIRA.

Well, haughty fair!
Hath reason yet subdued thee? Wilt thou hear
The voice of love?
Zaph. Why dost thou vainly urge me!
Thou know'st my fixed resolve.
Bar. Can aught but frenzy
Rush on perdition?
Zaph. Therefore, shall no power
Ere make me thine.
Bar. Nay, sport not with my rage:
Though yon suspected slave affirms him dead,
Yet rumour whispers, that young Selim lives.
Zaph. Could I but think him so! my earnest prayer
Should rise to heaven, to keep him far from thee!
Bar. Therefore, lest treachery undermine my power,
Know, that thy final hour of choice is come!
Zaph. I have no choice. Think'st thou I e'er will wed
The murderer of my lord?
Bar. Take heed, rash queen!

Tell me thy last resolve.
Zaph. Then hear me, Heaven!
Hear all ye powers that watch o'er innocence!
Angels of light! And thou, dear honoured shade
Of my departed lord! attend, while here
I ratify, with vows, my last resolve.
If e'er I wed this tyrant murderer,
If I pollute me with this horrid union,
Black as adultery or damned incest,
May ye, the ministers of Heaven, depart,
Nor shed your influence on the guilty scene!
May horror blacken all our days and nights!
May discord light the nuptial torch! and rising
From hell, may swarming fiends, in triumph, howl
Around the accursed bed!
Bar. Begone, remorse!
Guards do your office: Drag her to the altar:
Heed not her tears or cries. What!——dare ye doubt?
Instant obey my bidding; or, by hell,
Torment and death shall overtake you all.
[*Guards go to seize Zaphira.*
Zaph. O spare me! Heaven protect me! O my son,
Wert thou but here, to save thy helpless mother!
What shall I do! Undone, undone Zaphira!

Enter SELIM.

Selim. Who called on Achmet? Did not Barbarossa
Require me here?
Bar. Officious slave, retire!
I called thee not.
Zaph. O kind and generous stranger, lend thy aid!
O rescue me from these impending horrors!
Heaven will reward thy pity!
Bar. Drag her hence!
Selim. Pity her woes, O mighty Barbarossa!
Bar. Rouze not my vengeance, slave!
Selim. O hear me, hear me! [*Kneels.*
Bar. Curse on thy forward zeal!
Selim. Yet, yet have mercy.
[*Lays hold of Barbarossa's garment.*
Bar. Presuming slave, begone! [*Strikes Selim.*
Selim. Nay, then, die, tyrant!
[*Rises, and aims to strike Barbarossa, who wrests his dagger from him.*
Bar. Ah, traitor, have I caught thee! Hold! forbear!
[*To guards, who offer to kill Selim.*
Kill him not yet. I will have greater vengeance.
Perfidious wretch! who art thou? Bring the rack:
Let that extort the secrets of his heart.
Selim. Thy impious threats are lost! I know that death
And torments are my doom. Yet, ere I die,
I'll strike thy soul with horror. Off, vile habit!
Let me emerge from this dark cloud that hides me,
And make my setting glorious! If thou dar'st,
Now view me! Hear me, tyrant! while with voice
More terrible than thunder, I proclaim,
That he, who aimed the dagger at thy heart,
Is Selim!
Zaph. O Heaven! my son! my son!
[*She faints.*
Selim. Unhappy mother! [*Runs to embrace her.*
Bar. Tear them asunder!
[*Guards separate them.*
Selim. Barbarous, barbarous ruffians!
Bar. Slaves, seize the traitor!
[*They offer to seize him.*
Selim. Off, ye vile slaves! I am your king!—Retire,
And tremble at my frown! That is the traitor;
That is the murderer, tyrant, ravisher! Seize him,
And do your country right!
Bar. Ah, coward dogs!
Start ye at words! or seize him, or by hell,
This dagger ends you all. [*They seize him.*
Selim. 'Tis done! Dost thou revive, unhappy queen!
Now arm my soul with patience!
Zaph. My dear son!
Do I then live, once more to see my Selim!
But Oh—to see thee thus!—— [*Weeping.*
Selim. Canst thou behold
Her speechless agonies, and not relent!
Bar. At length revenge is mine! slaves, force her hence!
This hour shall crown my love.
Zaph. O mercy, mercy!
Selim. Lo! Barbarossa! thou, at length, hast conquered!
Behold a hapless prince, o'erwhelmed with woes,
[*Kneels.*
Prostrate before thy feet! Not for myself
I plead! Yes, plunge the dagger in my breast!
Tear, tear me piecemeal! But, O spare Zaphira!
Yet, yet relent! force not her matron honour!
Reproach not Heaven.
Bar. Have I then bent thy pride?
Why, this is conquest even beyond my hope!
Lie there, thou slave! lie, till Zaphira's cries
Arouse thee from thy posture.
Selim. Dost thou insult my grief? unmanly wretch!
Curse on the fear that could betray my limbs,
[*Rising.*
My coward limbs, to this dishonest posture!
Long have I scorned, I now defy thy power.
Bar. I'll put thy boasted virtue to the trial.
Slaves, bear him to the rack.
Zaph. O spare my son!
Sure filial virtue never was a crime!
Save but my son! I yield me to thy wish!
What do I say? The marriage vow! O horror!
This hour shall make me thine.
Selim. What! doom thyself
The guilty partner of a murderer's bed,

Whose hands yet reek with thy dear husband's blood!
To be the mother of destructive tyrants,
The curses of mankind! By Heaven, I swear,
The guilty hour that gives thee to the arms
Of that detested murderer, shall end
This hated life!
Bar. Or yield thee, or he dies!
Zaph. The conflict's past—I will resume my greatness;
We'll bravely die, as we have lived, with honour! [*Embracing.*
Selim. Now, tyrant, pour thy fiercest fury on us:
Now, see, despairing guilt! that virtue still
Shall conquer, though in ruin.
Bar. Drag them hence!
Her to the altar: Selim to his fate.
Zaph. O Selim! O my son! Thy doom is death!
Would it were mine!
Selim. Would I could give it thee!
Is there no means to save her! lend, ye guards,
Ye ministers of death, in pity lend
Your swords, or some kind weapon of destruction!
Sure the most mournful boon, that ever son
Asked for the best of mothers!
Zaph. Dearest Selim!
Bar. I'll hear no more. Guards, bear them to their fate! [*Guards seize them.*
Selim. One last embrace!
Farewell! Farewell for ever!
[*Guards struggle with them.*
Zaph. One moment yet! Pity a mother's pangs!
O Selim!
Selim. O my mother!
[*Exeunt Selim and Zaphira.*

Bar. My dearest hopes are blasted! What is power,
If stubborn virtue thus outsoar its flight!
Yet he shall die—and she—

Enter ALADIN.

Ala. Heaven guard my lord!
Bar. What mean'st thou, Aladin?
Ala. A slave arrived,
Says that young Selim lives: nay, somewhere lurks
Within these walls.
Bar. The lurking traitor's found,
Convicted, and disarmed. Even now he aimed
This dagger at my heart.
Ala. Audacious traitor!
The slave says, farther, that he brings the tidings
Of dark conspiracy, now hovering o'er us,
And claims thy private ear.
Bar. Of dark conspiracy!
Where? Among whom?
Ala. The secret friends of Selim,
Who nightly haunt the city.
Bar. Curse the traitors!
Now speed thee, Aladin. Send forth our spies:
Explore their haunts: for, by the infernal powers,
I will let loose my rage. The furious lion
Now foams indignant, scorning tears and cries.
Let Selim forthwith die. Come, mighty vengeance!
Stir me, grim cruelty! The rack shall groan
With new-born horrors! I will issue forth,
Like midnight-pestilence: my breath shall strew
The streets with dead; and havock stalk in gore.
Hence, pity! Feed the milky thought of babes;
Mine is of bloodier hue. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter BARBAROSSA, ALADIN, *and Guards.*

Bar. Is the watch doubled? Are the gates secured
Against surprise?
Ala. They are; and mock the attempt
Of force or treachery.
Bar. This whispered rumour
Of dark conspiracy, on farther inquest,
Seems but a false alarm. Our spies, sent out,
And now returned from search, affirm that sleep
Has wrapped the city.
Ala. But while Selim lives,
Destruction lurks within the palace walls;
Nor bars, nor centinels, can give us safety.
Bar. Right, Aladin. His hour of fate approaches.
How goes the night?
Ala. The second watch is near.

Bar. 'Tis well! Whene'er it rings, the traitor dies;
So hath my will ordained. I'll seize the occasion,
While I may fairly plead my life's defence.
Ala. True: for he aimed his dagger at thy heart.
Bar. He did. Hence, justice, uncompelled, shall seem
To lend her sword, and do ambition's work.
Ala. His bold resolves have steeled Zaphira's breast
Against thy love: thence he deserves to die.
Bar. And death's his doom—yet first the rack shall rend
Each secret from his heart; unless he give
Zaphira to my arms, by marriage vows,
With full consent; ere yet the second watch
Toll for his death. Curse on this woman's weakness!

I yet would win her love! Haste! seek out Othman:
Go, tell him, that destruction and the sword
Hang o'er young Selim's head, if swift compliance
Plead not his pardon. [*Exit Aladin.*
Stubborn fortitude!
Had he not interposed, success had crowned
My love, now hopeless. Then let vengeance seize him!

Enter IRENE.

Irene. O night of horror! Hear me, honoured father!
If e'er Irene's peace was dear to thee,
Now hear me!
Bar. Impious! Dar'st thou disobey?
Did not my sacred will ordain thee hence?
Get thee to rest; for death is stirring here.
Irene. O fatal words! By every sacred tye,
Recall the dire decree!
Bar. What would'st thou say?
Whom plead for?
Irene. For a brave unhappy prince,
Sentenced to die.
Bar. And justly! But this hour
The traitor half fulfilled thy dream, and aimed
His dagger at my heart.
Irene. Might pity plead!
Bar. What! plead for treachery?
Irene. Yet pity might bestow a milder name.
Wouldst thou not love the child, whose fortitude
Should hazard life for thee? Oh, think on that:
The noble mind hates not a virtuous foe:
His generous purpose was to save a mother!
Bar. Damned was his purpose: and accurst art thou,
Whose perfidy would save the dark assassin,
Who sought thy father's life! Hence, from my sight!
Irene. Oh, never, till thy mercy spare my Selim!
Bar. Thy Selim! Thine!
Irene. Thou knowst——by gratitude
He's mine——Had not his generous hand redeemed me,
What then had been Irene? Oh!
Bar. Faithless wretch!
Unhappy father! whose perfidious child
Leagues with his deadliest foe, and guides the dagger
Even to his heart! Perdition catch thy falsehood!
And is it thus, a thankless child repays me,
For all the guilt in which I plunged my soul,
To raise her to a throne!
Irene. O spare these words,
More keen than daggers to my bleeding heart!
Let me not live suspected! Dearest father!
Behold my breast! write thy suspicion here:
Write them in blood; but spare the generous youth,
Who saved me from dishonour!
Bar. By the powers
Of great revenge, thy fond intreaties seal
His instant death! In him I'll punish thee.
Away!
Irene. Yet hear me, ere my tortured soul
Rush on some deed of horror!
Bar. Seize her, guards!
Convey the frantic ideot from my presence:
See that she do no violence on herself.
Irene. O Selim! generous youth! how have my fears
Betrayed thee to destruction! Slaves, unhand me!
Think ye, I'll live to bear these pangs of grief,
These horrors that oppress my tortured soul!
Inhuman father! generous, injured prince!
Methinks I see thee stretched upon the rack,
Hear thy expiring groans: O horror! horror!
What shall I do to save him! Vain, alas!
Vain are my tears and prayers—at least, I'll die.
Death shall unite us yet!
[*Exit Irene and guards.*
Bar. O torment! torment!
Even in the midst of power! the vilest slave
More happy far than I! the very child,
Whom my love cherished from her infant years,
Conspires to blast my peace! O false ambition,
Thou lying phantom! whither hast thou lured me!
Even to this giddy height, where now I stand,
Forsaken, comfortless! with not a friend
In whom my soul can trust!

Enter ALADIN.

Now, Aladin?
Hast thou seen Othman?
He will not, sure, conspire against my peace?
Ala. He's fled, my lord. I dread some lurking ruin.
The centinel on watch says, that he passed
The gate, since midnight, with an unknown friend:
And as they passed, Othman in whispers said,
Now farewell, bloody tyrant.
Bar. Slave, thou liest.
He did not dare to say it; or, if he did,
Pernicious slave, why dost thou wound my ear
By the foul repetition?—Gracious powers,
Let me be calm!—O my distracted soul!
How am I rent in pieces! Othman fled!
Why then may all hell's curses follow him!
What's to be done? some mischief lurks unseen.
Ala. Prevent it then—
Bar. By Selim's instant death—
Ala. Ay, doubtless.
Bar. Is the rack prepared?
Ala. 'Tis ready.
Along the ground he lies o'erwhelmed with chains.
The ministers of death stand round, and wait
Thy last command.
Bar. Once more I'll try to bend

His stubborn soul.—Conduct me forthwith to him:
And if he now refuse my proffered kindness,
Destruction swallows him! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

SELIM *discovered in chains, Executioners, Officer, &c. and the rack.*

Selim. I pray you, friends,
When I am dead, let not indignity
Insult these poor remains; see them interred
Close by my father's tomb; I ask no more.
Officer. They shall.
Selim. How goes the night?
Offi. Thy hour of fate,
The second watch, is near.
Selim. Let it come on;
I am prepared.

Enter BARBAROSSA *and Guards.*

Bar. So—raise him from the ground.—
[*They raise him.*
Perfidious boy! behold the just rewards
Of guilt and treachery! Didst thou not give
Thy forfeit life, whene'er I should behold
Selim's detested face?
Selim. Then take it, tyrant.
Bar. Didst thou not aim a dagger at my heart?
Selim. I did.
Bar. Yet Heaven defeated thy intent,
And saved me from the dagger.
Selim. 'Tis not ours
To question Heaven. The intent, and not the deed,
Is in our power: and therefore, who dares greatly,
Does greatly.
Bar. Yet bethink thee, stubborn boy,
What horrors now surround thee—
Selim. Thinkest thou, tyrant,
I came so ill prepared?—Thy rage is weak,
Thy torments powerless o'er the steady mind:
He who can bravely dare, can bravely suffer.
Bar. Yet, lo! I come, by pity led, to spare thee.
Relent, and save Zaphira!—For the bell
Even now expects the centinel, to toll
The signal of thy death.
Selim. Let guilt like thine
Tremble at death: I scorn his darkest frown.
Hence, tyrant, nor prophane my dying hour!
Bar. Then take thy wish. [*Bell tolls.*
There goes the fatal knell.
Thy fate is sealed.—Not all thy mother's tears,
Nor prayers, nor eloquence of grief, shall save thee
From instant death. Yet ere the assassin die,
Let torment wring each secret from his heart.
The traitor Othman's fled;—Conspiracy
Lurks in the womb of night, and threatens ruin.
Spare not the rack, nor cease, till it extort
The lurking treason; and this murderer call
On death, to end his woes. [*Exit Barbarossa.*

Selim. Come on, then. [*They bind him.*
Begin the work of death—what! bound with cords,
Like a vile criminal!—O valiant friends,
When will ye give me vengeance!

Enter IRENE.

Irene. Stop, O stop!
Hold your accursed hands!—On me, on me
Pour all your torments!—How shall I approach thee!
Selim. These are thy father's gifts!—Yet thou art guiltless;
Then let me take thee to my heart, thou best,
Most amiable of women!
Irene. Rather curse me,
As the betrayer of thy virtue!
Selim. Ah!
Irene. 'Twas I—my fears, my frantic fears betrayed thee!
Thus falling at thy feet, may I but hope
For pardon ere I die!
Selim. Hence to thy father!
Irene. Never, O never!—Crawling in the dust,
I'll clasp thy feet, and bathe them with my tears!
Tread me to earth, I never will complain;
But my last breath shall bless thee!
Selim. Loved Irene!
What hath my fury done?
Irene. Indeed, 'twas hard;
But I was born to sorrow!
Selim. Melt me not.
I cannot bear thy tears;—they quite unman me.
Forgive the transports of my rage.
Irene. Alas!
The guilt is mine: Canst thou forgive those fears
That first awaked suspicion in my father?
Those fears that have undone thee!—Heaven is witness,
They meant not ill to thee!
Selim. None, none, Irene!
No; 'twas the generous voice of filial love:
That, only, prompted thee to save a father.
Yes; from my inmost soul I do approve
That virtue which destroys me.
Irene. Canst thou, then,
Forgive and pity me?
Selim. I do—I do.
Irene. On my knees,
Thus let me thank thee, generous, injured prince!
O earth and Heaven! that such unequalled worth
Should meet so hard a fate!—That I—that I—
Whom his love rescued from the depth of woe,
Should be the accurst destroyer!—Strike, in pity,
And end this hated life!
Selim. Cease, dear Irene.
Submit to Heaven's high will.—I charge thee, live;
And to thy utmost power, protect from wrong
My helpless, friendless mother!

†

Irene. With my life
I'll shield her from each wrong.—That hope alone
Can tempt me to prolong a life of woe.
Selim. O my ungoverned rage!—To frown on thee!
Thus let me expiate the cruel wrong, [*Embracing.*
And mingle rapture with the pains of death!
Offi. No more.—Prepare the rack.
Irene. Stand off, ye fiends!
Here will I cling. No power on earth shall part us,
Till I have saved my Selim! [*A shout.*
Offi. Hark! what noise
Strikes on mine ear?
Selim. Again! [*A shout.*
Ala. Arm, arm!—Treachery and murder! [*Without.*
[*Executioners go to seize Selim.*
Selim. Off, slaves!—Or I will turn my chains to arms,
And dash you piece-meal!—for I have heard a sound
Which lifts my towering soul to Atlas' height,
That I could prop the skies!
Ala. Where is the king?
The foe pours in. The palace gates are burst:
The centinels are murdered! Save the king!
They seek him through the palace!
Offi. Death and ruin!
Follow me, slaves, and save him.
[*Exeunt Officer and Executioners.*
Selim. Now, bloody tyrant! Now, thy hour is come!
Irene. What means yon maddening tumult!—O my fears!
Selim. Vengeance at length hath pierced these guilty walls,
And walks her deadly round!
Irene. Whom dost thou mean? my father!
Selim. Yes: thy father;
Who murdered mine!
Irene. Is there no room for mercy?
O Selim! by our love!—
Selim. Thy tears are vain!
Vain were thy eloquence, though thou didst plead
With an archangel's tongue!
Irene. Spare but his life!
Selim. Heaven knows I pity thee. But he must bleed;
Though my own life-blood, nay, though thine, more dear,
Should issue at the wound.
Irene. Must he then die?
Let me but see my father, ere he perish!
Let me but pay my parting duty to him!—
[*Clash of swords.*
Hark!—'twas the clash of swords! Heaven save my father?
O cruel, cruel Selim! [*Exit Irene*
Selim. Curse on this servile chain, that binds me fast,
In powerless ignominy; while my sword
Should haunt its prey, and cleave the tyrant down! [*Without.*
Oth. Where is the prince?
Selim. Here, Othman, bound to earth!
Set me but free!—O cursed, cursed chains!

Enter OTHMAN *and party, who free* SELIM.

Oth. O my brave prince!—Heaven favours our design. [*Embraces him.*
Take that:—I need not bid thee use it nobly.
[*Giving him a sword.*
Selim. Now, Barbarossa, let my arm meet thine:
'Tis all I ask of Heaven! [*Exit Selim.*
Oth. Guard ye the prince— [*Part go out.*
Pursue his steps.—Now this way let us turn,
And seek the tyrant. [*Exeunt Othman, &c.*

SCENE III. *changes to the open palace.*

Enter BARBAROSSA.

Bar. Empire is lost and life: Yet brave revenge
Shall close my life in glory.

Enter OTHMAN.

Have I found thee,
Dissembling traitor?—Die!—
Oth. Long hath my wish,
Pent in my struggling breast, been robbed of utterance.
Now valour scorns the mask.—I dare thee, tyrant!
And, armed with justice, thus would meet thy rage,
Though thy red right hand grasped the pointed thunder!
Now, Heaven decide between us! [*They fight.*
Bar. Coward!
Oth. Tyrant!
Bar. Traitor!
Oth. Infernal fiend, thy words are fraught with falsehood:
To combat crimes like thine, by force or wiles,
Is equal glory. [*Barbarossa falls.*
Bar. I faint! I die!—O horror!

Enter SELIM *and* SADI.

Selim. The foe gives way: sure this way went the storm.
Where is the tyger fled!—What do I see!
Sadi. Algiers is free!
Oth. This sabre did the deed!
Selim. I envy thee the blow.—Yet valour scorns
To wound the fallen.—But if life remain,
I will speak daggers to his guilty soul.
Hoa! Barbarossa! Tyrant! Murderer!
'Tis Selim, Selim calls thee!
Bar. Off, ye fiends!
Torment me not!—O Selim, art thou there?—
Swallow me, earth! Bury me deep, ye mountains!

Accursed be the day that gave me birth!
Oh, that I ne'er had wronged thee!
Selim. Dost thou, then,
Repent thee of thy crimes?—He does! He does!
He grasps my hand! See, the repentant tear
Starts from his eye!—Dost thou indeed repent?
Why then I do forgive thee: From my soul
I freely do forgive thee!—And if crimes,
Abhorred as thine, dare plead to Heaven for mercy,—
May Heaven have mercy on thee!
Bar. Generous Selim!
Too good—I have a daughter! Oh, protect her!
Let not my crimes— [*Dies.*
Oth. There fled the guilty soul!
Selim. Haste to the city—stop the rage of slaughter.
Tell my brave people that Algiers is free,
And tyranny no more. [*Exeunt slaves.*
Sadi. And to confirm
The glorious tidings, soon as morning shines,
Be his dead carcase dragged throughout the city,
A spectacle of horror!
Selim. Curb thy zeal.
Let us be brave, not cruel: nor disgrace
Valour, by barbarous and inhuman deeds.
Black was his guilt: and he hath paid his life,
The forfeit of his crimes. Then sheath the sword:
Let vengeance die.—Justice is satisfied.

Enter ZAPHIRA.

Zaph. What mean these horrors! wheresoe'er I turn
My trembling steps, I find some dying wretch,
Weltering in gore! And dost thou live, my Selim?
Selim. Lo, there he lies!
Zaph. The bloody tyrant slain!
O righteous Heaven!
Selim. Behold thy valiant friends,
Whose faith and courage have o'erwhelmed the power
Of Barbarossa. Here, once more, thy virtues
Shall dignify the throne, and bless the people.
Zaph. Just are thy ways, O Heaven!—Vain terrors, hence!
Once more Zaphira's blest!—My virtuous son,
How shall I e'er repay thy boundless love!
Thus let me snatch thee to my longing arms,
And on thy bosom weep my griefs away!
Selim. O happy hour!—happy, beyond the flight
Even of any ardent hope!—Look down, blest shade,
From the bright realms of bliss!—Behold thy queen
Unspotted, unseduced, unmoved in virtue!
Behold the tyrant prostrate at my feet!
And to the memory of thy bleeding wrongs,
Accept this sacrifice!
Zaph. My generous Selim!
Selim. Where is Irene?
Sadi. With looks of wildness, and distracted mien,
She sought her father where the tumult raged;
She passed me, while the coward Aladin
Fled from my sword: and as I cleft him down,
She fainted at the sight.
Oth. But soon recovered;
Zamor, our trusty friend, at my command,
Conveyed the weeping fair one to her chamber.
Selim. Thanks to thy generous care:—Come, let us seek
The afflicted maid.
Zaph. Her virtues might atone
For all her father's guilt. Thy throne be her's:
She merits all thy love.
Selim. Then haste and find her.—O'er her father's crimes
Pity shall draw her veil; nay, half absolve them,
When she beholds the virtues of his child!——
Now, let us thank the Eternal Power, convinced
That Heaven but tries our virtue by affliction:
That oft the cloud which wraps the present hour,
Serves but to brighten all our future days!
[*Exeunt omnes.*

DOUGLAS.

BY

HOME.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.	WOMEN.
Lord Randolph, *a Scottish baron.*	Lady Randolph.
Glenalvon, *his pretended friend.*	Anna, *her confidante.*
Norval, *an aged peasant.*	
Douglas, *supposed his son.*	*Officers, Attendants, &c.*

Scene—Lord Randolph's domains.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The court of a castle, surrounded with woods.*

Enter Lady Randolph.

Lady R. Ye woods and wilds, whose melancholy gloom
Accords with my soul's sadness, and draws forth
The voice of sorrow from my bursting heart,
Farewell awhile; I will not leave you long;
For in your shades I deem some spirit dwells,
Who, from the chiding stream, or groaning oak,
Still hears and answers to Matilda's moan.
Oh, Douglas! Douglas! if departed ghosts
Are e'er permitted to review this world,
Within the circle of that wood thou art,
And, with the passion of immortals, hear'st
My lamentation: hear'st thy wretched wife
Weep for her husband slain, her infant lost.
My brother's timeless death I seem to mourn,
Who perished with thee on this fatal day.
To thee I lift my voice; to thee address
The plaint which mortal ear has never heard.
O disregard me not! though I am called
Another's now, my heart is wholly thine.
Incapable of change, affection lies
Buried, my Douglas, in thy bloody grave.—
But Randolph comes, whom fate has made my lord,
To chide my anguish, and defraud the dead.

Enter Lord Randolph.

Lord R. Again these weeds of woe! say, dost thou well
To feed a passion which consumes thy life?
The living claim some duty; vainly thou
Bestow'st thy cares upon the silent dead.

Lady R. Silent, alas! is he for whom I mourn:
Childless, without memorial of his name,
He only now in my remembrance lives.
This fatal day stirs my time-settled sorrow,
Troubles afresh the fountain of my heart.

Lord R. When was it pure of sadness! These black weeds
Express the wonted colour of thy mind,
For ever dark and dismal. Seven long years
Are passed, since we were joined by sacred ties:
Clouds all the while have hung upon thy brow,
Nor broke, nor parted by one gleam of joy.
Time, that wears out the trace of deepest anguish,
As the sea smooths the prints made in the sand,
Has passed o'er thee in vain.

Lady R. If time to come
Should prove as ineffectual, yet, my lord,
Thou can'st not blame me. When our Scottish youth
Vyed with each other for my luckless love,
Oft I besought them, I implored them all,
Not to assail me with my father's aid,
Nor blend their better destiny with mine.
For melancholy had congealed my blood,
And froze affection in my chilly breast.
At last my sire, roused with the base attempt
To force me from him, which thou rendered'st vain,
To his own daughter bowed his hoary head,
Besought me to commiserate his age,
And vowed he should not, could not, die in peace,
Unless he saw me wedded, and secured
From violence and outrage. Then, my lord!
In my extreme distress I called on thee,
Thee I bespake, professed my strong desire
To lead a single, solitary life,
And begged thy nobleness, not to demand
Her for a wife, whose heart was dead to love.
How thou persisted'st after this, thou knowest,
And must confess that I am not unjust,
Nor more to thee than to myself injurious.

Lord R. That I confess; yet ever must regret
The grief I cannot cure. Would thou wert not
Composed of grief and tenderness alone,
But had'st a spark of other passions in thee,
Pride, anger, vanity, the strong desire
Of admiration, dear to woman-kind;
These might contend with, and allay thy grief,
As meeting tides and currents smooth our firth.

Lady R. To such a cause the human mind oft owes
Its transient calm; a calm I envy not.

Lord R. Sure thou art not the daughter of Sir Malcolm!
Strong was his rage, eternal his resentment:
For when thy brother fell, he smiled to hear
That Douglas' son in the same field was slain.

Lady R. Oh! rake not up the ashes of my fathers!
Implacable resentment was their crime,
And grievous has the expiation been.
Contending with the Douglas, gallant lives
Of either house were lost; my ancestors
Compelled, at last, to leave their ancient seat
On Tiviot's pleasant banks; and now, of them
No heir is left. Had they not been so stern,
I had not been the last of all my race.

Lord R. Thy grief wrests to its purposes my words.
I never asked of thee that ardent love
Which in the breasts of fancy's children burns.
Decent affection and complacent kindness
Were all I wished for; but I wished in vain.
Hence with the less regret my eyes behold
The storm of war that gathers o'er this land:
If I should perish by the Danish sword,
Matilda would not shed one tear the more.

Lady R. Thou dost not think so: woeful as I am,
I love thy merit, and esteem thy virtues.
But whither goest thou now?

Lord R. Straight to the camp,
Where every warrior on the tip-toe stands
Of expectation, and impatient asks
Each who arrives, if he is come to tell
The Danes are landed.

Lady R. O, may adverse winds
Far from the coast of Scotland drive their fleet:
And every soldier of both hosts return
In peace and safety to his pleasant home!

Lord R. Thou speakest a woman's, hear a warrior's wish:
Right from their native land, the stormy north,
May the wind blow, till every keel is fixed
Immoveable in Caledonia's strand!
Then shall our foes repent their bold invasion,
And roving armies shun the fatal shore.

Lady R. War I detest: but war with foreign foes,
Whose manners, language, and whose looks are strange,
Is not so horrid, nor to me so hateful,
As that which with our neighbours oft we wage.
A river here, there an ideal line,
By fancy drawn, divide the sister kingdoms.
On each side dwells a people similar,
As twins are, to each other; valiant both;
Both for their valour famous through the world.
Yet will they not unite their kindred arms,
And, if they must have war, wage distant war,
But with each other fight in cruel conflict.
Gallant in strife, and noble in their ire,
The battle is their pastime. They go forth
Gay in the morning, as to summer sport;
When evening comes, the glory of the morn,
The youthful warrior, is a clod of clay.
Thus fall the prime of either hapless land,
And such the fruit of Scotch and English wars!

Lord R. I'll hear no more: this melody would make
A soldier drop his sword, and doff his arms,
Sit down and weep the conquests he has made;
Yea, (like a monk) sing rest and peace in heaven
To souls of warriors in his battles slain.
Lady, farewell: I leave thee not alone;
Yonder comes one whose love makes duty light.
[*Exit.*

Enter ANNA.

Anna. Forgive the rashness of your Anna's love:
Urged by affection, I have thus presumed
To interrupt your solitary thoughts;
And warn you of the hours that you neglect,
And lose in sadness.

Lady R. So to lose my hours
Is all the use I wish to make of time.

Anna. To blame thee, lady, suits not with my state:
But sure I am, since death first preyed on man,
Never did sister thus a brother mourn.
What had your sorrows been if you had lost,
In early youth, the husband of your heart?
Lady R. Oh!
Anna. Have I distressed you with officious love,
And ill-timed mention of your brother's fate?
Forgive me, lady: humble though I am,
The mind I bear partakes not of my fortune:
So fervently I love you, that to dry
Those piteous tears, I'd throw my life away.
Lady R. What power directed thy unconscious tongue
To speak as thou hast done? to name———
Anna. I know not:
But since my words have made my mistress tremble,
I will speak so no more; but silent mix
My tears with hers.
Lady R. No, thou shalt not be silent.
I'll trust thy faithful love, and thou shalt be
Henceforth the instructed partner of my woes.
But what avails it? Can thy feeble pity
Roll back the flood of never-ebbing time?
Compel the earth and ocean to give up
Their dead alive?
Anna. What means my noble mistress?
Lady R. Did'st thou not ask what had my sorrows been,
If I in early youth had lost a husband?—
In the cold bosom of the earth is lodged,
Mangled with wounds, the husband of my youth;
And in some cavern of the ocean lies
My child and his.——
Anna. Oh! lady most revered!
The tale, wrapt up in your amazing words,
Deign to unfold!
Lady R. Alas! an ancient feud,
Hereditary evil, was the source
Of my misfortunes. Ruling fate decreed,
That my brave brother should in battle save
The life of Douglas' son, our house's foe:
The youthful warriors vowed eternal friendship.
To see the vaunted sister of his friend,
Impatient, Douglas to Balarmo came,
Under a borrowed name.—My heart he gained;
Nor did I long refuse the hand he begged:
My brother's presence authorized our marriage.
Three weeks, three little weeks, with wings of down,
Had o'er us flown, when my loved lord was called
To fight his father's battles; and with him,
In spite of all my tears, did Malcolm go.
Scarce were they gone, when my stern sire was told
That the false stranger was lord Douglas' son.
Frantic with rage, the baron drew his sword
And questioned me. Alone, forsaken, faint,
Kneeling beneath his sword, faultering I took
An oath equivocal, that I ne'er would
Wed one of Douglas' name. Sincerity!
Thou first of virtues, let no mortal leave
Thy onward path, although the earth should gape,
And from the gulf of hell destruction cry,
To take dissimulation's winding way!
Anna. Alas! how few of woman's fearful kind
Durst own a truth so hardy!
Lady R. The first truth
Is easiest to avow. This moral learn,
This precious moral from my tragic tale.——
In a few days the dreadful tidings came,
That Douglas and my brother both were slain.
My lord! my life! my husband!—mighty God!
What had I done to merit such affliction?
Anna. My dearest lady! many a tale of tears
I've listened to; but never did I hear
A tale so sad as this.
Lady R. In the first days
Of my distracting grief, I found myself—
As women wish to be who love their lords.
But who durst tell my father? The good priest,
Who joined our hands, my brother's ancient tutor,
With his loved Malcolm, in the battle fell:
They two alone were privy to the marriage.
On silence and concealment I resolved,
Till time should make my father's fortune mine.
That very night on which my son was born,
My nurse, the only confident I had,
Set out with him to reach her sister's house:
But nurse, nor infant have I ever seen,
Or heard of, Anna, since that fatal hour.
My murdered child!—had thy fond mother feared
The loss of thee, she had loud fame defied,
Despised her father's rage, her father's grief,
And wandered with thee through the scorning world.
Anna. Not seen nor heard of! then perhaps he lives.
Lady R. No. It was dark December; wind and rain
Had beat all night. Across the Carron lay
The destined road; and in its swelling flood
My faithful servant perished with my child.
Oh! hapless son of a most hapless sire!
But they are both at rest; and I, alone,
Dwell in this world of woe, condemned to walk,
Like a guilt-troubled ghost, my painful rounds;
Nor has despiteful fate permitted me
The comfort of a solitary sorrow.
Though dead to love, I was compelled to wed
Randolph, who snatched me from a villain's arms;
And Randolph now possesses the domains,
That by Sir Malcolm's death on me devolved;
Domains, that should to Douglas' son have given
A baron's title and a baron's power.
Such were my soothing thoughts, while I bewailed
The slaughtered father of a son unborn.
And when that son came, like a ray from heaven,
Which shines and disappears—alas, my child!

How long did thy fond mother grasp the hope
Of having thee, she knew not how, restored!
Year after year hath worn her hope away;
But left, still undiminished, her desire.
Anna. The hand, that spins the uneven thread of life,
May smooth the length that's yet to come of yours.
Lady R. Not in this world; I have considered well
Its various evils, and on whom they fall.
Alas! how oft does goodness wound itself,
And sweet affection prove the spring of woe!
Oh! had I died when my loved husband fell!
Had some good angel oped to me the book
Of Providence, and let me read my life,
My heart had broke, when I beheld the sum
Of ills, which one by one I have endured.
Anna. That God, whose ministers good angels are,
Hath shut the book, in mercy to mankind.
But we must leave this theme: Glenalvon comes:
I saw him bend on you his thoughtful eyes,
And hitherward he slowly stalks his way.
Lady R. I will avoid him. An ungracious person
Is doubly irksome in an hour like this.
Anna. Why speaks my lady thus of Randolph's heir?
Lady R. Because he's not the heir of Randolph's virtues.
Subtle and shrewd, he offers to mankind
An artificial image of himself:
And he with ease can vary, to the taste
Of different men, its features. Self-denied,
And master of his appetites, he seems:
But his fierce nature, like a fox chained up,
Watches to seize unseen the wished-for prey.
Never were vice and virtue poised so ill,
As in Glenalvon's unrelenting mind.
Yet is he brave and politic in war,
And stands aloft in these unruly times.
Why I describe him thus I'll tell hereafter.
Stay and detain him till I reach the castle.
[*Exit Lady Randolph.*
Anna. Oh happiness! Where art thou to be found?
I see thou dwellest not with birth and beauty,
Though graced with grandeur, and in wealth arrayed:
Nor dost thou, it would seem, with virtue dwell;
Else had this gentle lady missed thee not.

Enter GLENALVON.

Glen. What dost thou muse on, meditating maid?
Like some entranced and visionary seer,
On earth thou stand'st! thy thoughts ascend to Heaven.
Anna. Would that I were, even as thou say'st, a seer,
To have my doubts by heavenly vision cleared!
Glen. What dost thou doubt of? What hast thou to do
With subjects intricate? Thy youth, thy beauty,
Cannot be questioned: Think of these good gifts,
And then thy contemplations will be pleasing.
Anna. Let women view yon monument of woe,
Then boast of beauty: who so fair as she!
But I must follow; this revolving day
Awakes the memory of her antient woes.
[*Exit Anna.*
Glen. [*Solus.*] So! Lady Randolph shuns me; by and by
I'll woo her as the lion wooes his brides.
The deed's a doing now, that makes me lord
Of these rich valleys, and a chief of power.
The season is most apt; my sounding steps
Will not be heard amidst the din of arms.
Randolph has lived too long: his better fate
Had the ascendant once, and kept me down:
When I had seized the dame, by chance he came,
Rescued, and had the lady for his labour;
I escaped unknown; a slender consolation!
Heaven is my witness that I do not love
To sow in peril, and let others reap
The jocund harvest. Yet I am not safe:
By love, or something like it, stung, inflamed,
Madly I blabbed my passion to his wife,
And she has threatened to acquaint him of it.
The way of woman's will I do not know:
But well I know the baron's wrath is deadly.
I will not live in fear: the man I dread
Is as a Dane to me: ay, and the man
Who stands betwixt me and my chief desire.
No bar but he; she has no kinsman near;
No brother in his sister's quarrel bold;
And for the righteous cause, a stranger's cause,
I know no chief that will defy Glenalvon. [*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Court, &c.*

Enter servants and a stranger at one door, and LADY RANDOLPH *and* ANNA *at another.*

Lady R. WHAT means this clamour? Stranger, speak secure;
Hast thou been wronged? Have these proud men presumed
To vex the weary traveller on his way?
Ser. By us no stranger ever suffered wrong:
This man with outcry wild has called us forth;
So sore afraid he cannot speak his fears.

Enter LORD RANDOLPH *and a young man, with their swords drawn and bloody.*

Lady R. Not vain the stranger's fears! how fares my lord?

Lord R. That it fares well, thanks to this gallant youth,
Whose valour saved me from a wretched death!
As down the winding dale I walked alone,
At the cross-way four armed men attacked me:
Rovers, I judge, from the licentious camp,
Who would have quickly laid lord Randolph low,
Had not this brave and generous stranger come,
Like my good angel, in the hour of fate,
And, mocking danger, made my foes his own.
They turned upon him, but his active arm
Struck to the ground, from whence they rose no more,
The fiercest two; the others fled amain,
And left him master of the bloody field.
Speak, lady Randolph; upon beauty's tongue
Dwell accents pleasing to the brave and bold.
Speak, noble dame, and thank him for thy lord.

Lady R. My lord, I cannot speak what now I feel.
My heart o'erflows with gratitude to heaven,
And to this noble youth, who, all unknown
To you and yours, deliberated not,
Nor paused at peril, but, humanely brave,
Fought on your side against such fearful odds.
Have you not learned of him, whom we should thank?
Whom call the saviour of lord Randolph's life?

Lord R. I asked that question, and he answered not:
But I must know, who my deliverer is.
[*To the Stranger.*

Stran. A low-born man, of parentage obscure,
Who nought can boast but his desire to be
A soldier, and to gain a name in arms.

Lord R. Whoe'er thou art, thy spirit is ennobled
By the great King of kings! thou art ordained
And stamped a hero, by the sovereign hand
Of Nature! blush not, flower of modesty,
As well as valour, to declare thy birth.

Stran. My name is Norval: on the Grampian hills
My father feeds his flocks; a frugal swain,
Whose constant cares were to increase his store,
And keep his only son, myself, at home.
For I had heard of battles, and I longed
To follow to the field some warlike lord:
And Heaven soon granted what my sire denied.
This moon, which rose last night, round as my shield,
Had not yet filled her horns, when, by her light,
A band of fierce barbarians, from the hills,
Rushed, like a torrent, down upon the vale,
Sweeping our flocks and herds. The shepherds fled
For safety and for succour. I alone,
With bended bow, and quiver full of arrows,
Hovered about the enemy, and marked
The road he took; then hastened to my friends,
Whom, with a troop of fifty chosen men,
I met advancing. The pursuit I led,
Till we o'ertook the spoil encumbered foe.
We fought and conquered. Ere a sword was drawn,
An arrow from my bow had pierced their chief,
Who wore that day the arms which now I wear.
Returning home in triumph, I disdained
The shepherd's slothful life; and having heard
That our good king had summoned his bold peers
To lead their warriors to the Carron's side,
I left my father's house, and took with me
A chosen servant to conduct my steps:
Yon trembling coward, who forsook his master.
Journeying with this intent, I passed these towers,
And, heaven directed, came this day to do
The happy deed that gilds my humble name.

Lord R. He is as wise as brave. Was ever tale
With such a gallant modesty rehearsed?
My brave deliverer! thou shalt enter now
A nobler list, and, in a monarch's sight,
Contend with princes for the prize of fame.
I will present thee to the Scottish king,
Whose valiant spirit ever valour loved.
Ah! my Matilda, wherefore starts that tear?

Lady R. I cannot say: for various affections,
And strangely mingled, in my bosom swell;
Yet each of them may well command a tear.
I joy that thou art safe; and I admire
Him and his fortunes, who hath wrought thy safety;
Yea, as my mind predicts, with thine his own.
Obscure and friendless, he the army sought,
Bent upon peril, in the range of death
Resolved to hunt for fame, and with his sword
To gain distinction, which his birth denied.
In this attempt, unknown, he might have perished,
And gained, with all his valour, but oblivion.
Now, graced by thee, his virtues serve no more
Beneath despair. The soldier now of hope
He stands conspicuous; fame and great renown
Are brought within the compass of his sword.
On this my mind reflected, whilst you spoke,
And blessed the wonder-working lord of heaven.

Lord R. Pious and grateful ever are thy thoughts!
My deeds shall follow where thou point'st the way.
Next to myself, and equal to Glenalvon,
In honour and command shall Norval be.

Nor. I know not how to thank you. Rude I am
In speech and manners: never till this hour
Stood I in such a presence: yet, my lord,
There's something in my breast, which makes me bold
To say, that Norval ne'er will shame thy favour.

Lady R. I will be sworn thou wilt not. Thou shalt be
My knight: and ever, as thou didst to day,
With happy valour guard the life of Randolph.
Lord R. Well hast thou spoke. Let me forbid reply. [*To Norval.*
We are thy debtors still. Thy high desert
O'ertops our gratitude. I must proceed,
As was at first intended, to the camp.
Some of my train, I see, are speeding hither,
Impatient, doubtless, of their lord's delay.
Go with me, Norval, and thine eyes shall see
The chosen warriors of thy native land,
Who languish for the fight, and beat the air
With brandished swords.
Nor. Let us begone, my lord.
Lord R. [*To Lady Randolph.*] About the time that the declining sun
Shall his broad orbit o'er yon hills suspend,
Expect us to return. This night once more
Within these walls I rest; my tent I pitch
To-morrow in the field. Prepare the feast.
Free is his heart, who for his country fights:
He, in the eve of battle, may resign
Himself to social pleasure: sweetest then,
When danger to a soldier's soul endears
The human joy, that never may return.
[*Exeunt Randolph and Norval.*
Lady R. His parting words have struck a fatal truth.
Oh, Douglas! Douglas! tender was the time
When we two parted, ne'er to meet again!
How many years, of anguish and despair,
Has Heaven annexed to those swift passing hours
Of love and fondness! Then my bosom's flame
Oft, as blown back by the rude breath of fear,
Returned, and with redoubled ardour blazed.
Anna. May gracious Heaven pour the sweet balm of peace
Into the wounds that fester in your breast!
For earthly consolation cannot cure them.
Lady R. One only cure can Heaven itself bestow——
A grave—that bed in which the weary rest.
Wretch that I am! Alas! why am I so?
At every happy parent I repine!
How blest the mother of yon gallant Norval!
She for a living husband bore her pains,
And heard him bless her when a man was born:
She nursed her smiling infant on her breast,
Tended the child, and reared the pleasing boy;
She, with affection's triumph, saw the youth,
In grace and comeliness, surpass his peers:
Whilst I to a dead husband bore a son,
And to the roaring waters gave my child.
Anne. Alas! alas! why will you thus resume
Your grief afresh? I thought that gallant youth
Would, for a while, have won you from your woe.
On him intent you gazed, with a look
Much more delighted, than your pensive eye
Had deigned on other objects to bestow.
Lady R. Delighted, say'st thou? Oh! even there mine eye
Found fuel for my life-consuming sorrow;
I thought, that had the son of Douglas lived,
He might have been like this young gallant stranger,
And paired with him in features and in shape.
In all endowments, as in years, I deem,
My boy with blooming Norval might have numbered.
While thus I mused, a spark from fancy fell
On my sad heart, and kindled up a fondness
For this young stranger, wandering from his home,
And like an orphan cast upon my care.
I will protect thee, said I to myself,
With all my power, and grace with all my favour.
Anna. Sure Heaven will bless so generous a resolve.
You must, my noble dame, exert your power:
You must awake; devices will be framed,
And arrows pointed at the breast of Norval.
Lady R. Glenalvon's false and crafty head will work
Against a rival in his kinsman's love,
If I deter him not; I only can.
Bold as he is, Glenalvon will beware
How he pulls down the fabric that I raise.
I'll be the artist of young Norval's fortune.
'Tis pleasing to admire! most apt was I
To this affection in my better days;
Though now I seem to you shrunk up, retired
Within the narrow compass of my woe.
Have you not sometimes seen an early flower
Open its bud, and spread its silken leaves,
To catch sweet airs, and odours to bestow;
Then, by the keen blast nipt, pull in its leaves,
And, though still living, die to scent and beauty?
Emblem of me; affliction, like a storm,
Hath killed the forward blossom of my heart.

Enter GLENALVON.

Glen. Where is my dearest kinsman, noble Randolph?
Lady R. Have you not heard, Glenalvon, of the base—
Glen. I have; and that the villains may not 'scape,
With a strong band I have begirt the wood.
If they lurk there, alive they shall be taken,
And torture force from them the important secret,
Whether some foe of Randolph hired their swords,
Or if——
Lady R. That care becomes a kinsman's love.
I have a counsel for Glenalvon's ear. [*Exit Anna.*
Glen. To him your counsels always are commands.
Lady R. I have not found so; thou art known to me.
Glen. Known!

Lady R. And most certain is my cause of knowledge.
Glen. What do you know? By the most blessed cross,
You much amaze me. No created being,
Yourself except, durst thus accost Glenalvon.
Lady R. Is guilt so bold? and dost thou make a merit
Of thy pretended meekness? This to me,
Who, with a gentleness which duty blames,
Have hitherto concealed what, if divulged,
Would make thee nothing; or, what's worse than that,
An outcast beggar, and unpitied too!
For mortals shudder at a crime like thine.
Glen. Thy virtue awes me. First of womankind!
Permit me yet to say, that the fond man,
Whom love transports beyond strict virtue's bounds,
If he is brought by love to misery,
In fortune ruined, as in mind forlorn,
Unpitied cannot be. Pity's the alms
Which on such beggars freely is bestowed;
For mortals know that love is still their lord,
And o'er their vain resolves advances still:
As fire, when kindled by our shepherds, moves
Through the dry heath, before the fanning wind.
Lady R. Reserve these accents for some other ear.
To love's apology I listen not.
Mark thou my words; for it is meet thou shouldst.
His brave deliverer Randolph here retains.
Perhaps his presence may not please thee well;
But, at thy peril, practise aught against him!
Let not thy jealousy attempt to shake
And loosen the good root he has in Randolph;
Whose favourites I know thou hast supplanted.
Thou look'st at me, as if thou fain would'st pry
Into my heart. 'Tis open as my speech.
I give this early caution, and put on
The curb, before thy temper breaks away.
The friendless stranger my protection claims:
His friend I am, and be not thou his foe. [*Exit.*
Glen. Child that I was, to start at my own shadow,
And be the shallow fool of coward conscience!
I am not what I have been; what I should be.
The darts of destiny have almost pierced
My marble heart. Had I one grain of faith
In holy legends and religious tales,
I should conclude there was an arm above,
That fought against me, and malignant turned,
To catch myself, the subtle snare I set.
Why, rape and murder are not simple means!
The imperfect rape to Randolph gave a spouse,
And the intended murder introduced
A favourite to hide the sun from me;
And, worst of all, a rival. Burning hell!
This were thy centre, if I thought she loved him!
'Tis certain she contemns me; nay, commands me,
And waves the flag of her displeasure o'er me,
In his behalf. And shall I thus be braved?
Curbed, as she calls it, by dame chastity?
Infernal fiends, if any fiends there are
More fierce than hate, ambition, or revenge,
Rise up, and fill my bosom with your fires,
And policy remorseless! Chance may spoil
A single aim; but perseverance must
Prosper at last. For chance and fate are words:
Persistive wisdom is the fate of man.
Darkly a project peers upon my mind,
Like the red moon when rising in the east,
Crossed and divided by strange-coloured clouds.
I'll seek the slave who came with Norval hither,
And for his cowardice was spurned from him.
I've known a follower's rankled bosom breed
Venom most fatal to his heedless lord. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Court, &c. as before.*

Enter ANNA.

Anna. THY vassals, grief, great nature's order break,
And change the noon-tide to the midnight hour.
Whilst lady Randolph sleeps, I will walk forth,
And taste the air that breathes on yonder bank.
Sweet may her slumbers be! Ye ministers
Of gracious Heaven, who love the human race,
Angels and seraphs, who delight in goodness,
Forsake your skies, and to her couch descend!
There from her fancy chase those dismal forms,
That haunt her waking; her sad spirit charm
With images celestial, such as please
The blest above upon their golden beds.

Enter Servant.

Ser. One of the vile assassins is secured.
We found the villain lurking in the wood:
With dreadful imprecations he denies
All knowledge of the crime. But this is not
His first essay: these jewels were concealed
In the most secret places of his garment;
Belike the spoils of some that he has murdered.
Anna. Let me look on them. Ha! here is a heart,
The chosen crest of Douglas' valiant name!
These are no vulgar jewels. Guard the wretch.
[*Exit Anna.*

Enter Servants with a Prisoner.

Pris. I know no more than does the child unborn

Of what you charge me with.
1st Ser. You say so, sir!
But torture soon shall make you speak the truth.
Behold, the lady of lord Randolph comes:
Prepare yourself to meet her just revenge.

Enter LADY RANDOLPH *and* ANNA.

Anna. Summon your utmost fortitude, before
You speak with him. Your dignity, your fame,
Are now at stake. Think of the fatal secret,
Which in a moment from your lips may fly.
Lady R. Thou shalt behold me, with a desperate heart,
Hear how my infant perished. See, he kneels.
[*The prisoner kneels.*
Pris. Heaven bless that countenance so sweet and mild!
A judge like thee makes innocence more bold.
Oh, save me, lady, from these cruel men,
Who have attacked and seized me; who accuse
Me of intended murder. As I hope
For mercy at the judgment-seat of Heaven,
The tender lamb, that never nipt the grass,
Is not more innocent than I of murder.
Lady R. Of this man's guilt what proof can ye produce?
1st Ser. We found him lurking in the hollow glynn.
When viewed and called upon, amazed he fled.
We overtook him, and enquired from whence
And what he was: he said he came from far,
And was upon his journey to the camp.
Not satisfied with this, we searched his clothes,
And found these jewels, whose rich value plead
Most powerfully against him. Hard he seems,
And old in villainy. Permit us try
His stubbornness against the torture's force.
Pris. Oh, gentle lady! by your lord's dear life,
Which these weak hands, I swear, did ne'er assail;
And by your children's welfare, spare my age!
Let not the iron tear my ancient joints,
And my grey hairs bring to the grave with pain!
Lady R. Account for these; thine own they cannot be:
For these, I say: be stedfast to the truth;
Detected falshood is most certain death.
[*Anna removes the servants, and returns.*]
Pris. Alas! I'm sore beset! let never man,
For sake of lucre, sin against his soul!
Eternal justice is in this most just!
I, guiltless now, must former guilt reveal.
Lady R. Oh! Anna, hear!—once more I charge thee speak
The truth direct; for these to me foretell
And certify a part of thy narration;
With which, if the remainder tallies not,
An instant and a dreadful death abides thee.
Pris. Then, thus adjured, I'll speak to you as just
As if you were the minister of heaven,
Sent down to search the secret sins of men:—
Some eighteen years ago I rented land
Of brave sir Malcolm, then Balarmo's lord;
But falling to decay, his servants seized
All that I had, and then turned me and mine,
(Four helpless infants and their weeping mother)
Out to the mercy of the winter winds.
A little hovel by the river's side
Received us: there hard labour, and the skill
In fishing, which was formerly my sport,
Supported life. Whilst thus we poorly lived,
One stormy night, as I remember well,
The wind and rain beat hard upon our roof;
Red came the river down, and loud and oft
The angry spirit of the water shrieked.
At the dead hour of night was heard the cry
Of one in jeopardy. I rose, and ran
To where the circling eddy of a pool,
Beneath the ford, used oft to bring within
My reach, whatever floating thing the stream
Had caught. The voice was ceased; the person lost;
But looking sad and earnest on the waters,
By the moon's light I saw, whirled round and round,
A basket: soon I drew it to the bank,
And nestled curious there an infant lay.
Lady R. Was he alive?
Pris. He was.
Lady R. Inhuman that thou art!
How couldst thou kill what waves and tempests spared?
Pris. I am not so inhuman.
Lady R. Didst thou not?
Anna. My noble mistress, you are moved too much:
This man has not the aspect of stern murder;
Let him go on, and you, I hope, will hear
Good tidings of your kinsman's long-lost child.
Pris. The needy man, who has known better days,
One whom distress has spited at the world,
Is he whom tempting fiends would pitch upon
To do such deeds as make the prosperous men
Lift up their hands, and wonder who could do them.
And such a man was I; a man declined,
Who saw no end of black adversity:
Yet, for the wealth of kingdoms, I would not
Have touched that infant with a hand of harm.
Lady R. Ha! dost thou say so? then perhaps he lives!
Pris. Not many days ago he was alive.
Lady R. O God of Heaven! did he then die so lately?
Pris. I did not say he died; I hope he lives.
Not many days ago these eyes beheld
Him, flourishing in youth, and health, and beauty.
Lady R. Where is he now?
Pris. Alas! I know not where.
Lady R. Oh, fate! I fear thee still. Thou riddler, speak

Direct and clear; else I will reach thy soul.
Anna. Permit me, ever honoured! Keen impatience,
Though hard to be restrained, defeats itself.
Pursue thy story with a faithful tongue,
To the last hour that thou didst keep the child.
Pris. Fear not my faith, though I must speak my shame;
Within the cradle where the infant lay,
Was stowed a mighty store of gold and jewels;
Tempted by which, we did resolve to hide
From all the world this wonderful event,
And, like a peasant, breed the noble child.
That none might mark the change of our estate,
We left the country, travelled to the north,
Bought flocks and herds, and gradually brought forth
Our secret wealth. But God's all-seeing eye
Beheld our avarice, and smote us sore.
For one by one all our own children died,
And he, the stranger, sole remained the heir
Of what indeed was his. Fain then would I,
Who with a father's fondness loved the boy,
Have trusted him, now in the dawn of youth,
With his own secret: but my anxious wife,
Foreboding evil, never would consent.
Meanwhile the stripling grew in years and beauty;
And, as we oft observed, he bore himself,
Not as the offspring of our cottage blood;
For nature will break out: mild with the mild,
But with the froward he was fierce as fire,
And night and day he talked of war and arms.
I set myself against his warlike bent;
But all in vain; for when a desperate band
Of robbers from the savage mountains came—
Lady R. Eternal Providence! What is thy name?
Pris. My name is Norval; and my name he bears.
Lady R. 'Tis he! 'tis he himself! It is my son!
Oh, sovereign mercy! 'Twas my child I saw!
No wonder, Anna, that my bosom burned.
Anna. Just are your transports: ne'er was woman's heart
Proved with such fierce extremes, high fated dame!
But yet remember that you are beheld
By servile eyes; your gestures may be seen
Impassioned, strange; perhaps your words o'erheard.
Lady R. Well dost thou counsel, Anna: heaven bestow
On me that wisdom which my state requires!
Anna. The moments of deliberation pass,
And soon you must resolve. This useful man
Must be dismissed in safety, ere my lord
Shall, with his brave deliverer, return.
Pris. If I, amidst astonishment and fear,
Have of your words and gestures rightly judged,
Thou art the daughter of my ancient master;
The child I rescued from the flood is thine.
Lady R. With thee dissimulation now were vain;
I am indeed the daughter of Sir Malcolm;
The child thou rescued from the flood is mine.
Pris. Blest be the hour that made me a poor man!
My poverty has saved my master's house!
Lady R. Thy words surprise me: sure thou dost not feign!
The tear stands in thine eye; such love from thee
Sir Malcolm's house deserve not; if aright
Thou told'st the story of thy own distress.
Pris. Sir Malcolm of our barons was the flower;
The fastest friend, the best, the kindest master.
But ah! he knew not of my sad estate.
After that battle, where his gallant son,
Your own brave brother, fell, the good old lord
Grew desperate and reckless of the world;
And never, as he erst was wont, went forth
To overlook the conduct of his servants.
By them I was thrust out, and them I blame:
May Heaven so judge me as I judge my master!
And God so love me as I love his race!
Lady R. His race shall yet reward thee.—On thy faith
Depends the fate of thy loved master's house.
Rememb'rest thou a little lonely hut,
That like a holy hermitage appears
Among the cliffs of Carron?
Pris. I remember the cottage of the cliffs.
Lady R. 'Tis that I mean:
There dwells a man of venerable age,
Who in my father's service spent his youth:
Tell him I sent thee, and with him remain,
Till I shall call upon thee to declare,
Before the king and nobles, what thou now
To me hast told. No more but this, and thou
Shalt live in honour all thy future days;
Thy son so long shall call thee father still,
And all the land shall bless the man, who saved
The son of Douglas, and Sir Malcolm's heir.
Remember well my words; if thou should'st meet
Him whom thou call'st thy son, still call him so;
And mention nothing of his nobler father.
Pris. Fear not that I shall mar so fair an harvest,
By putting in my sickle ere 'tis ripe.
Why did I leave my home and ancient dame?
To find the youth, to tell him all I know,
And make him wear these jewels on his arms,
Which might, I thought, be challenged, and so bring
To light the secret of his noble birth.
[*Lady Randolph goes towards the Servants.*
Lady R. This man is not the assassin you suspected,
Though chance combined some likelihoods against him.
He is the faithful bearer of the jewels

To their right owner, whom in haste he seeks.
'Tis meet that you should put him on his way,
Since your mistaken zeal has dragged him hither.

[*Exeunt Stranger and Servants.*

My faithful Anna! dost thou share my joy?
I know thou dost. Unparallelled event!
Reaching from heaven to earth, Jehovah's arm
Snatched from the waves, and brings to me my son!
Judge of the widow, and the orphan's father,
Accept a widow's and a mother's thanks
For such a gift! What does my Anna think
Of the young eaglet of a valiant nest?
How soon he gazed on bright and burning arms,
Spurned the low dunghill where his fate had thrown him,
And towered up to the region of his sire!

Anna. How fondly did your eyes devour the boy!
Mysterious nature, with the unseen cord
Of powerful instinct, drew you to your own.

Lady R. The ready story of his birth believed
Suppress my fancy quite; nor did he owe
To any likeness my so sudden favour:
But now I long to see his face again,
Examine every feature, and find out
The lineaments of Douglas, or my own.
But most of all I long to let him know
Who his true parents are, to clasp his neck,
And tell him all the story of his father.

Anna. With wary caution you must bear yourself
In public, lest your tenderness break forth,
And in observers stir conjectures strange.
For, if a cherub in the shape of woman
Should walk this world, yet defamation would,
Like a vile cur, bark at the angel's train.
To-day the baron started at your tears.

Lady R. He did so, Anna! well thy mistress knows
If the least circumstance, mote of offence,
Should touch the baron's eye, his sight would be
With jealousy disordered. But the more
It does behove me instant to declare
The birth of Douglas, and assert his rights.
This night I purpose with my son to meet,
Reveal the secret, and consult with him:
For wise he is, or my fond judgment errs.
As he does now, so looked his noble father,
Arrayed in Nature's ease: his mein, his speech,
Were sweetly simple, and full oft deceived
Those trivial mortals who seem always wise.
But, when the matter matched his mighty mind,
Up rose the hero; on his piercing eye
Sat observation; on each glance of thought
Decision followed, as the thunderbolt
Pursues the flash.

Anna. That demon haunts you still:
Behold Glenalvon.

Lady R. Now I shun him not.
This day I braved him in behalf of Norval:
Perhaps too far: at least my nicer fears
For Douglas thus interpret.

Enter GLENALVON.

Glen. Noble dame!
The hovering Dane, at last, his men hath landed:
No band of pirates; but a mighty host,
That come to settle where their valour conquers:
To win a country, or to lose themselves.

Lady R. But whence comes this intelligence, Glenalvon?

Glen. A nimble courier, sent from yonder camp,
To hasten up the chieftains of the north,
Informed me, as he passed, that the fierce Dane
Had on the eastern coast of Lothian landed,
Near to that place where the sea-rock immense,
Amazing Bass, looks o'er a fertile land.

Lady R. Then must this western army march to join
The warlike troops that guard Edina's towers?

Glen. Beyond all question. If impairing time
Has not effaced the image of a place,
Once perfect in my breast, there is a wild
Which lies to westward of that mighty rock,
And seems by nature formed for the camp
Of water-wafted armies, whose chief strength
Lies in firm foot, unflanked with warlike horse:
If martial skill directs the Danish lords,
There inaccessible their army lies
To our swift-scouring horse; the bloody field
Must man to man, and foot to foot be fought.

Lady R. How many mothers shall bewail their sons!
How many widows weep their husbands slain!
Ye dames of Denmark, even for you I feel,
Who, sadly sitting on the sea-beat shore,
Long look for lords that never shall return.

Glen. Oft has the unconquered Caledonian sword
Widowed the north. The children of the slain
Come, as I hope, to meet their fathers' fate.
The monster war, with her infernal brood,
Loud-yelling fury and life-ending pain,
Are objects suited to Glenalvon's soul.
Scorn is more grievous than the pains of death;
Reproach more piercing than the pointed sword.

Lady R. I scorn thee not but when I ought to scorn;
Nor e'er reproach, but when insulted virtue
Against audacious vice asserts herself.
I own thy worth, Glenalvon; none more apt
Than I to praise thine eminence in arms,
And be the echo of thy martial fame.
No longer vainly feed a guilty passion:
Go and pursue a lawful mistress, Glory.
Upon the Danish crests redeem thy fault,
And let thy valour be the shield of Randolph.

Glen. One instant stay, and hear an altered man.
When beauty pleads for virtue, vice, abashed,
Flies its own colours, and goes o'er to virtue.

I am your convert; time will shew how truly:
Yet one immediate proof I mean to give.
That youth, for whom your ardent zeal, to-day,
Somewhat too haughtily defied your slave,
Amidst the shock of armies I'll defend,
And turn death from him, with a guardian's arm.
Sedate by use, my bosom maddens not
At the tumultuous uproar of the field.

Lady R. Act thus, Glenalvon, and I am thy friend;
But that's thy least reward. Believe me, sir,
The truly generous is the truly wise;
And he, who loves not others, lives unblest.

[*Exit Lady Randolph.*

Glen. [*solus.*] Amen! and virtue is its own reward!
I think that I have hit the very tone
In which she loves to speak. Honeyed assent,
How pleasant art thou to the taste of man,
And woman also! flattery direct
Rarely disgusts. They little know mankind
Who doubt its operation: 'tis my key,
And opes the wicket of the human heart.
How far I have succeeded now I know not.
Yet I incline to think her stormy virtue
Is lulled awhile; 'tis her alone I fear;
Whilst she and Randolph live, and live in faith
And amity, uncertain is my tenure.
Fate o'er my head suspends disgrace and death,
By that weak air, a peevish female's will.
I am not idle; but the ebbs and flows
Of fortune's tide cannot be calculated.
That slave of Norval's I have found most apt:
I shewed him gold, and he has pawned his soul
To say and swear whatever I suggest.
Norval, I'm told, has that alluring look,
'Twixt man and woman, which I have observed
To charm the nicer and fantastic dames,
Who are, like lady Randolph, full of virtue.
In raising Randolph's jealousy, I may
But point him to the truth. He seldom errs,
Who thinks the worst he can of womankind.

[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Flourish of trumpets.*

Enter Lord RANDOLPH *attended.*

Lord R. SUMMON an hundred horse, by break of day,
To wait our pleasure at the castle gate.

Enter Lady RANDOLPH.

Lady R. Alas, my lord! I've heard unwelcome news;
The Danes are landed.

Lord R. Ay; no inroad this
Of the Northumbrian, bent to take a spoil:
No sportive war, no tournament essay
Of some young knight resolved to break a spear,
And stain with hostile blood his maiden arms.
The Danes are landed: we must beat them back,
Or live the slaves of Denmark.

Lady R. Dreadful times!

Lord R. The fenceless villages are all forsaken;
The trembling mothers and their children lodged
In wall-girt towers and castles; whilst the men
Retire indignant. Yet, like broken waves,
They but retire more awful to return.

Lady R. Immense, as fame reports, the Danish host!

Lord R. Were it as numerous as loud fame reports,
An army knit like ours would pierce it through:
Brothers, that shrink not from each other's side,
And fond companions, fill our warlike files:
For his dear offspring, and the wife he loves,
The husband and the fearless father arm.
In vulgar breasts heroic ardour burns,
And the poor peasant mates his dying lord.

Lady R. Men's minds are tempered, like their swords, for war;
Lovers of danger, on destruction's brink
They joy to rear erect their daring forms.
Hence, early graves; hence, the lone widow's life;
And the sad mother's grief-embittered age.
Where is our gallant guest?

Lord R. Down in the vale
I left him, managing a fiery steed,
Whose stubbornness had foiled the strength and skill
Of every rider. But behold he comes,
In earnest conversation with Glenalvon.

Enter NORVAL *and* GLENALVON.

Glenalvon! with the lark arise; go forth,
And lead my troops that lie in yonder vale:
Private I travel to the royal camp.
Norval, thou goest with me. But say, young man!
Where didst thou learn so to discourse of war,
And in such terms, as I o'erheard to day?
War is no village science, nor its phrase
A language taught amongst the shepherd swains.

Nor. Small is the skill my lord delights to praise
In him he favours. Hear from whence it came.
Beneath a mountain's brow, the most remote
And inaccessible by shepherds trod,
In a deep cave, dug by no mortal hand,
A hermit lived: a melancholy man,
Who was the wonder of our wandering swains.
Austere and lonely, cruel to himself,
Did they report him; the cold earth his bed,
Water his drink, his food the shepherd's alms.

I went to see him, and my heart was touched
With reverence and with pity. Mild he spake,
And, entering on discourse, such stories told,
As made me oft revisit his sad cell.
For he had been a soldier in his youth;
And fought in famous battles, when the peers
Of Europe, by the bold Godfredo led,
Against the usurping infidel displayed
The blessed cross, and won the Holy Land.
Pleased with my admiration, and the fire
His speech struck from me, the old man would shake
His years away, and act his young encounters:
Then, having shewed his wounds, he would sit him down,
And all the live-long day discourse of war.
To help my fancy, in the smooth green turf
He cut the figures of the marshalled hosts;
Described the motions, and explained the use,
Of the deep column, and the lengthened line,
The square, the crescent, and the phalanx firm.
For all that Saracen or Christian knew
Of war's vast art, was to this hermit known.
Lord R. Why did this soldier in a desert hide
Those qualities, that should have graced a camp?
Nor. That too at last I learned. Unhappy man!
Returning homeward by Messina's port,
Loaded with wealth and honours bravely won,
A rude and boisterous captain of the sea
Fastened a quarrel on him. Fierce they fought;
The stranger fell, and, with his dying breath,
Declared his name and lineage. Mighty power!
The soldier cried, my brother! Oh, my brother!
Lady R. His brother!
Nor. Yes; of the same parents born;
His only brother. They exchanged forgiveness:
And happy, in my mind, was he that died;
For many deaths has the survivor suffered.
In the wild desert on a rock he sits,
Or on some nameless stream's untrodden banks,
And ruminates all day his dreadful fate.
At times, alas! not in his perfect mind,
Holds dialogues with his loved brother's ghost;
And oft each night forsakes his sullen couch,
To make sad orisons for him he slew.
Lady R. To what mysterious woes are mortals born!
In this dire tragedy were there no more
Unhappy persons? Did the parents live?
Nor. No, they were dead; kind Heaven had closed their eyes,
Before their son had shed his brother's blood.
Lord R. Hard is his fate; for he was not to blame.
There is a destiny in this strange world,
Which oft decrees an undeserved doom.
Let schoolmen tell us why—From whence these sounds? [*Trumpets at a distance.*

Enter an Officer.

Offi. My lord, the trumpets of the troops of Lorn:
Their valiant leader hails the noble Randolph.
Lord R. Mine ancient guest! Does he the warriors lead?
Has Denmark roused the brave old knight to arms?
Offi. No; worn with warfare, he resigns the sword,
His eldest hope, the valiant John of Lorn,
Now leads his kindred bands.
Lord R. Glenalvon, go.
With hospitality's most strong request
Entreat the chief. [*Exit Glenalvon.*
Offi. My lord, requests are vain.
He urges on, impatient of delay,
Stung with the tidings of the foes approach.
Lord R. May victory sit on the warrior's plume!
Bravest of men! his flocks and herds are safe;
Remote from war's alarms his pastures lie,
By mountains inaccessible secured:
Yet foremost he into the plain descends,
Eager to bleed in battles not his own.
Such were the heroes of the ancient world;
Contemners they of indolence and gain;
But still, for love of glory and of arms,
Prone to encounter peril, and to lift,
Against each strong antagonist, the spear.
I'll go and press the hero to my breast.
[*Exit with the Officer.*
Lady R. The soldier's loftiness, the pride and pomp
Investing awful war, Norval, I see,
Transport thy youthful mind.
Nor. Ah! should they not?
Blessed be the hour I left my father's house!
I might have been a shepherd all my days,
And stole obscurely to a peasant's grave.
Now, if I live, with mighty chiefs I stand;
And, if I fall, with noble dust I lie.
Lady R. There is a generous spirit in thy breast,
That could have well sustained a prouder fortune.
This way with me; under yon spreading beech,
Unseen, unheard, by human eye or ear,
I will amaze thee with a wond'rous tale.
Nor. Let there be danger, lady, with the secret,
That I may hug it to my grateful heart,
And prove my faith. Command my sword, my life:
These are the sole possessions of poor Norval.
Lady R. Know'st thou these gems?
Nor. Durst I believe mine eyes,
I would say I knew them, and they were my father's.
Lady R. Thy father's, say'st thou? Ah, they were thy father's!

Nor. I saw them once, and curiously enquired
Of both my parents, whence such splendour came?
But I was checked, and more could never learn.
Lady R. Then learn of me, thou art not Norval's son.
Nor. Not Norval's son!
Lady R. Nor of a shepherd sprung.
Nor. Lady, whom am I then?
Lady R. Noble thou art;
For noble was thy sire.
Nor. I will believe——
Oh, tell me farther? Say, who was my father?
Lady R. Douglas!
Nor. Lord Douglas, whom to-day I saw?
Lady R. His younger brother.
Nor. And in yonder camp?
Lady R. Alas!
Nor. You make me tremble—Sighs and tears!
Lives my brave father?
Lady R. Ah! too brave, indeed!
He fell in battle ere thyself was born.
Nor. Ah me, unhappy! Ere I saw the light!
But does my mother live? I may conclude,
From my own fate, her portion has been sorrow.
Lady R. She lives; but wastes her life in constant woe,
Weeping her husband slain, her infant lost.
Nor. You, that are skilled so well in the sad story
Of my unhappy parents, and with tears
Bewail their destiny, now have compassion
Upon the offspring of the friends you loved.
Oh, tell me who, and where, my mother is!
Oppressed by a base world, perhaps she bends
Beneath the weight of other ills than grief;
And, desolate, implores of Heaven the aid
Her son should give. It is, it must be so——
Your countenance confesses that she's wretched.
Oh, tell me her condition! Can the sword——
Who shall resist me in a parent's cause?
Lady R. Thy virtue ends her woes——My son! my son!
I am thy mother, and the wife of Douglas!
[*Falls upon his neck.*
Nor. Oh, heaven and earth! how wond'rous is my fate!
Art thou my mother? Ever let me kneel!
Lady R. Image of Douglas! fruit of fatal love!
All that I owe thy sire, I pay to thee.
Nor. Respect and admiration still possess me,
Checking the love and fondness of a son:
Yet I was filial to my humble parents.
But did my sire surpass the rest of men,
As thou excellest all of womankind?
Lady R. Arise, my son. In me thou dost behold
The poor remains of beauty once admired.
The autumn of my days is come already,
For sorrow made my summer haste away;
Yet in my prime I equalled not thy father:
His eyes were like the eagle's, yet sometimes
Liker the dove's; and, as he pleased, he won
All hearts with softness, or with spirit awed.
Nor. How did he fall? Sure 'twas a bloody field
When Douglas died. Oh, I have much to ask!
Lady R. Hereafter thou shalt hear the lengthened tale
Of all thy father's and thy mother's woes.
At present this—Thou art the rightful heir
Of yonder castle, and the wide domains,
Which now lord Randolph, as my husband, holds.
But thou shalt not be wronged; I have the power
To right thee still. Before the king I'll kneel,
And call lord Douglas to protect his blood.
Nor. The blood of Douglas will protect itself.
Lady R. But we shall need both friends and favour, boy,
To wrest thy lands and lordship from the gripe
Of Randolph and his kinsman. Yet I think
My tale will move each gentle heart to pity,
My life incline the virtuous to believe.
Nor. To be the son of Douglas, is to me
Inheritance enough. Declare my birth,
And in the field I'll seek for fame and fortune.
Lady R. Thou dost not know what perils and injustice
Await the poor man's valour. Oh, my son!
The noblest blood of all the land's abashed,
Having no lacquey but pale poverty.
Too long hast thou been thus attended, Douglas,
Too long hast thou been deemed a peasant's child.
The wanton heir of some inglorious chief,
Perhaps, has scorned thee in the youthful sports,
Whilst thy indignant spirit swelled in vain.
Such contumely thou no more shalt bear:
But how I purpose to redress thy wrongs
Must be hereafter told. Prudence directs
That we should part before yon chiefs return.
Retire, and from thy rustic follower's hand
Receive a billet, which thy mother's care,
Anxious to see thee, dictated before
This casual opportunity arose
Of private conference. Its purport mark;
For, as I there appoint, we meet again.
Leave me, my son; and frame thy manners still
To Norval's, not to noble Douglas' state.
Nor. I will remember. Where is Norval now?
That good old man.
Lady R. At hand concealed he lies,
An useful witness. But beware, my son,
Of yon Glenalvon; in his guilty breast
Resides a villain's shrewdness, ever prone
To false conjecture. He hath grieved my heart.
Nor. Has he, indeed? Then let yon false Glenalvon
Beware of me! [*Exit.*
Lady R. There burst the smothered flame.
Oh, thou all-righteous and eternal King!
Who Father of the fatherless art called,
Protect my son! Thy inspiration, Lord!

Hath filled his bosom with that sacred fire,
Which in the breasts of his forefathers burned!
Set him on high, like them, that he may shine
The star and glory of his native land!
Then let the minister of death descend,
And bear my willing spirit to its place.
Yonder they come. How do bad women find
Unchanging aspects to conceal their guilt,
When I, by reason and by justice urged,
Full hardly can dissemble with these men,
In nature's pious cause?

Enter LORD RANDOLPH *and* GLENALVON.

Lord R. Yon gallant chief,
Of arms enamoured, all repose disclaims.
Lady R. Be not, my lord, by his example swayed.
Arrange the business of to-morrow now,
And when you enter, speak of war no more.
[*Exit.*
Lord R. 'Tis so, by Heaven! her mein, her voice, her eye,
And her impatience to be gone, confirm it.
Glen. He parted from her now. Behind the mount,
Amongst the trees, I saw him glide along.
Lord R. For sad sequestered virtue she's renowned.
Glen. Most true, my lord,
Lord R. Yet this distinguished dame
Invites a youth, the acquaintance of a day,
Alone to meet her at the midnight hour.
This assignation, [*Shews a letter.*] the assassin freed,
Her manifest affection for the youth,
Might breed suspicion in a husband's brain,
Whose gentle consort all for love had wedded:
Much more in mine. Matilda never loved me.
Let no man, after me, a woman wed,
Whose heart he knows he has not; though she brings
A mine of gold, a kingdom for her dowry.
For let her seem, like the night's shadowy queen,
Cold and contemplative—he cannot trust her:
She may, she will, bring shame and sorrow on him:
The worst of sorrows, and the worst of shames!
Glen. Yield not, my lord, to such afflicting thoughts;
But let the spirit of an husband sleep,
Till your own senses make a sure conclusion.
This billet must to blooming Norval go:
At the next turn awaits my trusty spy;
I'll give it him refitted for his master.
In the close thicket take your secret stand;
The moon shines bright, and your own eyes may judge
Of their behaviour.
Lord R. Thou dost counsel well.
Glen. Permit me now to make one slight essay.
Of all the trophies which vain mortals boast,
By wit, by valour, or by wisdom won,
The first and fairest, in a young man's eye,
Is woman's captive heart. Successful love
With glorious fumes intoxicates the mind,
And the proud conqueror in triumph moves,
Air-born, exalted above vulgar men.
Lord R. And what avails this maxim?
Glen. Much, my lord.
Withdraw a little; I'll accost young Norval,
And with ironical derisive counsel
Explore his spirit. If he is no more
Than humble Norval, by thy favour raised,
Brave as he is, he'll shrink astonished from me:
But if he be the favourite of the fair,
Loved by the first of Caledonia's dames,
He'll turn upon me, as the lion turns
Upon the hunter's spear.
Lord R. 'Tis shrewdly thought.
Glen. When we grow loud, draw near. But let my lord
His rising wrath restrain. [*Exit Randolph.*
'Tis strange, by Heaven!
That she should run, full tilt, her fond career
To one so little known. She, too, that seemed
Pure as the winter stream, when ice, embossed,
Whitens its course. Even I did think her chaste,
Whose charity exceeds not. Precious sex!
Whose deeds lascivious pass Glenalvon's thoughts!

Enter NORVAL.

His port I love; he's in a proper mood
To chide the thunder, if at him it roared. [*Aside.*
Has Norval seen the troops?
Nor. The setting sun,
With yellow radiance, lightened all the vale;
And, as the warriors moved, each polished helm,
Corslet, or spear, glanced back his gilded beams.
The hill they climbed, and halting at its top,
Of more than mortal size, towering, they seemed
An host angelic, clad in burning arms.
Glen. Thou talk'st it well; no leader of our host,
In sounds more lofty, speaks of glorious war.
Nor. If I shall e'er acquire a leader's name,
My speech will be less ardent. Novelty
Now prompts my tongue, and youthful admiration
Vents itself freely; since no part is mine
Of praise pertaining to the great in arms.
Glen. You wrong yourself, brave sir; your martial deeds
Have ranked you with the great. But mark me, Norval;
Lord Randolph's favour now exalts your youth
Above his veterans of famous service.
Let me, who know these soldiers, counsel you.
Give them all honour; seem not to command;
Else they will scarcely brook your late sprung power,
Which nor alliance props, nor birth adorns.
Nor. Sir, I have been accustomed all my days
To hear and speak the plain and simple truth:
And though I have been told that there are men,

Who borrow friendship's tongue to speak their scorn,
Yet in such language I am little skilled.
Therefore, I thank Glenalvon for his counsel,
Although it sounded harshly. Why remind
Me of my birth obscure? Why slur my power
With such contemptuous terms?
Glen. I did not mean
To gall your pride, which now I see is great.
Nor. My pride!
Glen. Suppress it, as you wish to prosper.
Your pride's excessive. Yet, for Randolph's sake,
I will not leave you to its rash direction.
If thus you swell, and frown at high-born men,
Will high-born men endure a shepherd's scorn?
Nor. A shepherd's scorn!
Glen. Yes; if you presume
To bend on soldiers these disdainful eyes,
What will become of you!
Nor. If this were told!—— [*Aside.*
Hast thou no fears for thy presumptuous self?
Glen. Ha! dost thou threaten me?
Nor. Didst thou not hear?
Glen. Unwillingly I did; a nobler foe
Had not been questioned thus. But such as thee——
Nor. Whom dost thou think me?
Glen. Norval.
Nor. So I am——
And who is Norval in Glenalvon's eyes?
Glen. A peasant's son, a wandering beggar-boy;
At best no more, even if he speaks the truth.
Nor. False as thou art, dost thou suspect my truth?
Glen. Thy truth! thou'rt all a lie: and false as hell
Is the vain-glorious tale thou toldst to Randolph.
Nor. If I were chained, unarmed, and bed-rid old,
Perhaps I should revile; but as I am,
I have no tongue to rail. The humble Norval
Is of a race who strive not but with deeds.
Did I not fear to freeze thy shallow valour,
And make thee sink too soon beneath my sword,
I'd tell thee—what thou art. I know thee well.
Glen. Dost thou not know Glenalvon, born to command
Ten thousand slaves like thee———
Nor. Villain, no more!
Draw and defend thy life. I did design
To have defied thee in another cause:
But heaven accelerates its vengeance on thee.
Now for my own and lady Randolph's wrongs!

Enter LORD RANDOLPH.

Lord R. Hold, I command you both. The man that stirs
Makes me his foe.
Nor. Another voice than thine
That threat had vainly sounded, noble Randolph.
Glen. Hear him, my lord; he's wonderous condescending!
Mark the humility of shepherd Norval!
Nor. Now you may scoff in safety. [*Sheathes his sword.*
Lord R. Speak not thus,
Taunting each other; but unfold to me
The cause of quarrel; then I judge betwixt you.
Nor. Nay, my good lord! though I revere you much,
My cause I plead not, nor demand your judgment.
I blush to speak! I will not, cannot speak
The opprobrious words that I from him have borne,
To the liege-lord of my dear native land
I owe a subject's homage: but even him
And his high arbitration I'd reject.
Within my bosom reigns another lord;
Honour, sole judge, and umpire of itself.
If my free speech offend you, noble Randolph,
Revoke your favours, and let Norval go
Hence as he came, alone, but not dishonoured.
Lord R. Thus far I'll mediate with impartial voice:
The ancient foe of Caledonia's land
Now waves his banners o'er her frighted fields.
Suspend your purpose till your country's arms
Repel the bold invader: then decide
The private quarrel.
Glen. I agree to this.
Nor. And I.

Enter Servant.

Ser. The banquet waits.
Lord R. We come. [*Exit Servant.*
Glen. Norval,
Let not our variance mar the social hour,
Nor wrong the hospitality of Randolph.
Nor frowning anger, nor yet wrinkled hate,
Shall stain my countenance. Smooth thou thy brow;
Nor let our strife disturb the gentle dame.
Nor. Think not so lightly, sir, of my resentment.
When we contend again, our strife is mortal.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Grove.*

Enter DOUGLAS.

Doug. THIS is the place, the centre of the grove;
Here stands the oak, the monarch of the wood.
How sweet and solemn is this midnight scene!
The silver moon, unclouded, holds her way
Through skies where I could count each little star.
The fanning west wind scarcely stirs the leaves;
The river, rushing o'er its pebbled bed,
Imposes silence with a stilly sound.
In such a place as this, at such an hour,
If ancestry can be in aught believed,
Descending spirits have conversed with man,
And told the secrets of the world unknown.

Enter Old NORVAL.

Old Nor. 'Tis he. But what if he should chide me hence?
His just reproach I fear.
[*Douglas turns aside, and sees him.*
Forgive! forgive!
Canst thou forgive the man, the selfish man,
Who bred sir Malcolm's heir a shepherd's son?
Doug. Kneel not to me; thou art my father still:
Thy wished-for presence now completes my joy.
Welcome to me; my fortunes thou shalt share,
And ever honoured with thy Douglas live.
Old Nor. And dost thou call me father? Oh, my son!
I think that I could die to make amends
For the great wrong I did thee. 'Twas my crime
Which in the wilderness so long concealed
The blossom of thy youth.
Doug. Not worse the fruit,
That in the wilderness the blossom blowed.
Amongst the shepherds, in the humble cot,
I learned some lessons, which I'll not forget
When I inhabit yonder lofty towers.
I, who was once a swain, will ever prove
The poor man's friend; and when my vassals bow,
Norval shall smooth the crested pride of Douglas.
Old Nor. Let me but live to see thine exaltation!
Yet grievous are my fears. Oh, leave this place,
And those unfriendly towers!
Doug. Why should I leave them?
Old Nor. Lord Randolph and his kinsman seek your life.
Doug. How knowest thou that?
Old Nor. I will inform you how:
When evening came, I left the secret place
Appointed for me by your mother's care,
And fondly trod in each accustomed path
That to the castle leads. Whilst thus I ranged,
I was alarmed with unexpected sounds
Of earnest voices. On the persons came.
Unseen I lurked, and overheard them name
Each other as they talked; lord Randolph this,
And that Glenalvon. Still of you they spoke,
And of the lady; threatening was their speech,
Though but imperfectly my ear could hear it.
'Twas strange, they said, a wonderful discovery:
And ever and anon they vowed revenge,
Doug. Revenge! for what?
Old Nor. For being what you are,
Sir Malcolm's heir: how else have you offended?
When they were gone, I hied me to my cottage,
And there sat musing how I best might find
Means to inform you of their wicked purpose;
But I could think of none. At last, perplexed,
I issued forth, encompassing the tower,
With many a wearied step, and wishful look.
Now Providence hath brought you to my sight,
Let not your too courageous spirit scorn
The caution which I give.
Doug. I scorn it not.
My mother warned me of Glenalvon's baseness;
But I will not suspect the noble Randolph.
In our encounter with the vile assassins,
I marked his brave demeanour; him I'll trust.
Old. Nor. I fear you will, too far.
Doug. Here in this place
I wait my mother's coming: she shall know
What thou hast told: her counsel I will follow.
And cautious ever are a mother's counsels.
You must depart: your presence may prevent
Our interview.
Old Nor. My blessing rest upon thee!
Oh, may Heaven's hand, which saved thee from the wave,
And from the sword of foes, be near thee still;
Turning mischance, if aught hangs o'er thy head,
All upon mine! [*Exit.*
Doug. He loves me like a parent;
And must not, shall not, lose the son he loves,
Although his son has found a nobler father.
Eventful day! How hast thou changed my state!
Once on the cold and winter-shaded side
Of a bleak hill mischance had rooted me,
Never to thrive, child of another soil.
Transplanted now to the gay sunny vale,
Like the green thorn of May my fortune flowers.
Ye glorious stars! high Heaven's resplendent host!
To whom I oft have of my lot complained,
Hear and record my soul's unaltered wish!
Dead or alive, let me but be renowned!
May heaven inspire some fierce gigantic Dane
To give a bold defiance to our host!
Before he speaks it out I will accept;
Like Douglas conquer, or like Douglas die.

Enter LADY RANDOLPH.

Lady R. My son! I heard a voice——
Doug. The voice was mine.
Lady R. Didst thou complain aloud to Nature's ear,
That thus in dusky shades, at midnight hours,
By stealth the mother and the son should meet?
[*Embracing him.*
Doug. No; on this happy day, this better birth-day,
My thoughts and words are all of hope and joy.
Lady R. Sad fear and melancholy still divide
The empire of my breast with hope and joy.
Now hear what I devise——
Doug. First, let me tell
What may the tenor of your counsel change.
Lady R. My heart forebodes some evil.
Doug. 'Tis not good——
At eve, unseen by Randolph and Glenalvon,
The good old Norval in the grove o'erheard
Their conversation; oft they mentioned me,
With dreadful threatenings; you they sometimes named.
'Twas strange, they said, a wonderful discovery;
And ever and anon they vowed revenge.
Lady R. Defend us, gracious God! we are betrayed:
They have found out the secret of thy birth:
It must be so. That is the great discovery.
Sir Malcolm's heir is come to claim his own,
And they will be revenged. Perhaps even now,
Armed and prepared for murder, they but wait
A darker and more silent hour to break
Into the chamber where they think thou sleep'st.
This moment, this, Heaven hath ordained to save thee!
Fly to the camp, my son!
Doug. And leave you here?
No: to the castle let us go together.
Call up the ancient servants of your house,
Who in their youth did eat your father's bread.
Then tell them loudly that I am your son.
If in the breasts of men one spark remains
Of sacred love, fidelity, or pity,
Some in your cause will arm. I ask but few
To drive those spoilers from my father's house.
Lady R. Oh, Nature, Nature! what can check thy force?
Thou genuine offspring of the daring Douglas!
But rush not on destruction: save thyself,
And I am safe. To me they mean no harm.
Thy stay but risks thy precious life in vain.
That winding path conducts thee to the river.
Cross where thou seest a broad and beaten way,
Which, running eastward, leads thee to the camp.
Instant demand admittance to lord Douglas;
Shew him these jewels which his brother wore.
Thy look, thy voice, will make him feel the truth,
Which I, by certain proof, will soon confirm.
Doug. I yield me, and obey: but yet my heart
Bleeds at this parting. Something bids me stay,
And guard a mother's life. Oft have I read
Of wondrous deeds by one bold arm atchieved.
Our foes are two; no more: let me go forth,
And see if any shield can guard Glenalvon!
Lady R. If thou regard'st thy mother, or rever'st
Thy father's memory, think of this no more.
One thing I have to say before we part:
Long wert thou lost; and thou art found, my child,
In a most fearful season. War and battle
I have great cause to dread. Too well I see
Which way the current of thy temper sets:
To-day I've found thee. Oh! my long lost hope!
If thou to giddy valour giv'st the rein,
To-morrow I may lose my son for ever.
The love of thee, before thou saw'st the light,
Sustained my life when thy brave father fell.
If thou shalt fall, I have nor love nor hope
In this waste world! My son, remember me!
Doug. What shall I say? How can I give you comfort?
The God of battles of my life dispose
As may be best for you! for whose dear sake
I will not bear myself as I resolved.
But yet consider, as no vulgar name,
That which I boast, sounds amongst martial men,
How will inglorious caution suit my claim?
The post of fate unshrinking I maintain.
My country's foes must witness who I am.
On the invaders' heads I'll prove my birth,
Till friends and foes confess the genuine strain.
If in this strife I fall, blame not your son,
Who, if he lives not honoured, must not live.
Lady R. I will not utter what my bosom feels.
Too well I love that valour which I warn.
Farewell, my son! my counsels are but vain,
[*Embracing.*
And as high Heaven hath willed it, all must be.
[*Separate.*
Gaze not on me, thou wilt mistake the path;
I'll point it out again.
[*Just as they are separating.*

Enter from the wood LORD RANDOLPH *and* GLENALVON.

Lord R. Not in her presence.
Now——
Glen. I am prepared.
Lord R. No: I command thee stay.
I go alone: it never shall be said
That I took odds to combat mortal man.
The noblest vengeance is the most complete.
[*Exit.*
[*Glenalvon makes some steps to the same side of the stage, listens and speaks.*
Glen. Demons of death, come, settle on my sword,
And to a double slaughter guide it home!
The lover and the husband both must die.

Lord R. [*Behind the Scenes.*] Draw, villain! draw!
Doug.]*Without.*] Assail me not, lord Randolph;
Not as thou lovest thyself. [*Clashing of swords.*
Glen. [*Running out.*] Now is the time.

Enter LADY RANDOLPH, *at the other side of the stage, faint and breathless.*

Lady R. Lord Randolph, hear me, all shall be thine own!
But spare! Oh, spare my son!

Enter DOUGLAS, *with a sword in each hand.*

Doug. My mother's voice!
I can protect thee still.
Lady R. He lives, he lives:
For this, for this to Heaven eternal praise!
But sure I saw thee fall.
Doug. It was Glenalvon;
Just as my arm had mastered Randolph's sword,
The villain came behind me; but I slew him.
Lady R. Behind thee! ah! thou art wounded! Oh, my child,
How pale thou look'st! And shall I lose thee now?
Doug. Do not despair: I feel a little faintness,
I hope it will not last. [*Leans upon his sword.*
Lady R. There is no hope!
And we must part! The hand of death is on thee!
Oh! my beloved child! O Douglas, Douglas?
[*Douglas growing more and more faint.*
Doug. Too soon we part: I have not long been Douglas;
O destiny! hardly thou deal'st with me!
Clouded and hid, a stranger to myself,
In low and poor obscurity I've lived.
Lady R. Has Heaven preserved thee for an end like this!
Doug. Oh! had I fallen as my brave fathers fell,
Turning with fatal arm the tide of battle,
Like them I should have smiled and welcomed death:
But thus to perish by a villain's hand!
Cut off from nature's and from glory's course,
Which never mortal was so fond to run.
Lady R. Hear, justice, hear! stretch thy avenging arm! [*Douglas falls.*
Doug. Unknown I die; no tongue shall speak of me.
Some noble spirits, judging by themselves,
May yet conjecture what I might have proved,
And think life only wanting to my fame:
But who shall comfort thee?
Lady R. Despair, despair!
Doug. Oh, had it pleased high Heaven to let me live
A little while!——my eyes, that gaze on thee,
Grow dim apace! my mother—O! my mother!
[*Dies.*

Enter Lord RANDOLPH *and* ANNA.

Lord R. Thy words, thy words of truth, have pierced my heart;
I am the stain of knighthood and of arms.
Oh! if my brave deliverer survives
The traitor's sword——
Anna. Alas! look there, my lord.
Lord R. The mother and her son! How curst I am!
Was I the cause? No: I was not the cause.
Yon matchless villain did seduce my soul
To frantic jealousy.
Anna. My lady lives:
The agony of grief hath but suppressed
Awhile her powers.
Lord R. But my deliverer's dead;
The world did once esteem lord Randolph well,
Sincere of heart, for spotless honour famed;
And, in my early days, glory I gained
Beneath the holy banner of the cross.
Now past the noon of life, shame comes upon me;
Reproach and infamy, and public hate,
Are near at hand: for all mankind will think
That Randolph basely stabbed Sir Malcolm's heir.
Lady R. [*recovering.*] Where am I now?—Still in this wretched world!
Grief cannot break a heart so hard as mine.
My youth was worn in anguish: but youth's strength,
With hope's assistance, bore the brunt of sorrow;
And trained me on to be the object now,
On which Omnipotence displays itself,
Making a spectacle, a tale of me,
To awe its vassal, man.
Lord R. Oh, misery!
Amidst thy raging grief I must proclaim
My innocence.
Lady R. Thy innocence!
Lord R. My guilt
Is innocence compared with what thou think'st it.
Lady R. Of thee I think not: what have I to do
With thee, or any thing? My son! my son!
My beautiful! my brave! how proud was I
Of thee and of thy valour! my fond heart
O'erflowed this day with transport, when I thought
Of growing old amidst a race of thine,
Who might make up to me their father's childhood,
And bear my brother's and my husband's name:
Now all my hopes are dead! A little while
Was I a wife! a mother not so long!
What am I now?—I know.—But I shall be
That only whilst I please; for such a son
And such a husband drive me to my fate.
[*Runs out.*
Lord R. Follow her, Anna: I myself would follow,

But in this rage she must abhor my presence.
[*Exit Anna.*

Enter Old NORVAL.

Old Nor. I heard the voice of woe: Heaven guard my child!

Lord R. Already is the idle gaping crowd,
The spiteful vulgar, come to gaze on Randolph.
Begone.

Old Nor. I fear thee not. I will not go.
Here I'll remain. I'm an accomplice, lord,
With thee in murder. Yes, my sins did help
To crush down to the ground this lovely plant.
Oh, noblest youth that ever yet was born!
Sweetest and best, gentlest and bravest spirit,
That ever blest the world! Wretch that I am,
Who saw that noble spirit swell and rise
Above the narrow limits that confined it,
Yet never was by all thy virtues won
To do thee justice, and reveal the secret,
Which, timely known, had raised thee far above
The villain's snare. Oh! I am punished now!
These are the hairs that should have strewed the ground,
And not the locks of Douglas.
[*Tears his hair, and throws himself upon the body of Douglas.*

Lord R. I know thee now: thy boldness I forgive:
My crest is fallen. For thee I will appoint
A place of rest, if grief will let thee rest.
I will reward, although I cannot punish.
Cursed, cursed Glenalvon! he escaped too well,
Though slain and baffled by the hand he hated.
Foaming with rage and fury to the last,
Cursing his conqueror, the felon died.

Enter ANNA.

Anna. My lord! My lord!

Lord R. Speak: I can hear of horror.

Anna. Horror, indeed!

Lord R. Matilda—

Anna. Is no more:
She ran, she flew like lightning up the hill,
Nor halted till the precipice she gained,
Beneath whose lowering top the river falls
Ingulphed in rifted rocks: thither she came,
As fearless as the eagle lights upon it,
And headlong down——

Lord R. 'Twas I, alas! 'twas I
That filled her breast with fury; drove her down
The precipice of death! Wretch that I am!

Anna. Oh, had you seen her last despairing look!
Upon the brink she stood, and cast her eyes
Down on the deep: then, lifting up her head
And her white hands to Heaven, seeming to say,
Why am I forced to this? she plunged herself
Into the empty air.

Lord R. I will not vent,
In vain complaints, the passion of my soul.
Peace in this world I never can enjoy.
These wounds the gratitude of Randolph gave;
They speak aloud. I am resolved. I'll go
Straight to the battle, where the man that makes
Me turn aside must threaten worse than death.
Thou, faithful to thy mistress, take this ring,
Full warrant of my power. Let every rite
With cost and pomp upon their funerals wait:
For Randolph hopes he never shall return.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

ISABELLA;

OR,

THE FATAL MARRIAGE.

ALTERED FROM

SOUTHERN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

COUNT BALDWIN, *father to Biron and Carlos.*
BIRON, *married to Isabella, supposed dead.*
CARLOS, *his younger brother.*
VILLEROY, *in love with Isabella, marries her.*
SAMPSON, *porter to count Baldwin.*
A Child of Isabella by Biron.
BELFORD, *a friend of Biron's.*
PEDRO, *a friend to Carlos.*

WOMEN.

ISABELLA, *married to Biron and Villeroy.*
Nurse to Biron.
Officers, Servants, Men, and Women.

Scene—Brussels.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Before count* BALDWIN'S *house.*

Enter VILLEROY *and* CARLOS.

Car. THIS constancy of yours will establish an immortal reputation among the women.

Vil. If it would establish me with Isabella—

Car. Follow her, follow her: Troy town was won at last.

Vil. I have followed her these seven years, and now but live in hopes.

Car. But live in hopes! Why, hope is the ready road, the lover's baiting-place; and, for aught you know, but one stage short of the possession of your mistress.

Vil. But my hopes, I fear, are more of my own making than her's; and proceed rather from my wishes, than any encouragement she has given me.

Car. That I cannot tell: the sex is very various; there are no certain measures to be prescribed or followed, in making our approaches to the women. All that we have to do, I think, is to attempt them in the weakest part. Press them but hard, and they will all fall under the necessity of a surrender at last. That favour comes at once; and sometimes when we least expect it.

Vil. I shall be glad to find it so.

Car. You will find it so. Every place is to be taken, that is not to be relieved: she must comply.

Vil. I am going to visit her.

Car. What interest a brother-in-law can have with her, depend upon.

Vil. I know your interest, and I thank you.

Car. You are prevented; see, the mourner comes;
She weeps, as seven years were seven hours;
So fresh, unfading, is the memory
Of my poor brother's, Biron's, death:
I leave you to your opportunity. [*Exit Vil.*

Though I have taken care to root her from our house,
I would transplant her into Villeroy's——
There is an evil fate that waits upon her,
To which I wish him wedded—Only him:
His upstart family, with haughty brow,
(Though Villeroy and myself are seeming friends)
Looks down upon our house; his sister, too,
Whose hand I asked, and was with scorn refused,
Lives in my breast, and fires me to revenge.——
They bend this way——
Perhaps, at last, she seeks my father's doors;
They shall be shut, and he prepared to give
The beggar and her brat a cold reception.
That boy's an adder in my path—they come;
I'll stand apart, and watch their motions.

[*Retires.*

Enter VILLEROY, *with* ISABELLA *and her little son.*

Isa. Why do you follow me? you know I am
A bankrupt every way; too far engaged
Ever to make return: I own you have been
More than a brother to me, my friend;
And at a time when friends are found no more,
A friend to my misfortunes.

Vil. I must be always your friend.

Isa. I have known, and found you
Truly my friend; and would I could be yours;
But the unfortunate cannot be friends:
Fate watches the first motion of the soul,
To disappoint our wishes; if we pray
For blessings, they prove curses in the end,
To ruin all about us. Pray, be gone;
Take warning, and be happy.

Vil. Happiness!
There's none for me without you: Riches, name,
Health, fame, distinction, place, and quality,
Are the incumbrances of groaning life,
To make it but more tedious without you.
What serve the goods of fortune for? To raise
My hopes, that you at last will share them with me.
Long life itself, the universal prayer,
And Heaven's reward of well-deservers here,
Would prove a plague to me; to see you always,
And never see you mine! still to desire,
And never to enjoy!

Isa. I must not hear you.

Vil. Thus, at this awful distance, I have served
A seven years bondage—Do I call it bondage,
When I can never wish to be redeemed?
No, let me rather linger out a life
Of expectation, that you may be mine,
Than be restored to the indifference
Of seeing you, without this pleasing pain:
I've lost myself, and never would be found,
But in these arms.

Isa. Oh, I have heard all this!——
But must no more——the charmer is no more:
My buried husband rises in the face
Of my dear boy, and chides me for my stay:
Canst thou forgive me, child?

Child. Why, have you done a fault? You cry as if you had. Indeed now, I have done nothing to offend you: but if you kiss me, and look so very sad upon me, I shall cry too.

Isa. My little angel, no, you must not cry;
Sorrow will overtake thy steps too soon:
I should not hasten it.

Vil. What can I say!
The arguments that make against my hopes
Prevail upon my heart, and fix me more;
Those pious tears you hourly throw away
Upon the grave, have all their quickening charms,
And more engage my love, to make you mine:
When yet a virgin, free, and undisposed,
I loved, but saw you only with my eyes;
I could not reach the beauties of your soul:
I have since lived in contemplation,
And long experience of your growing goodness:
What then was passion, is my judgment now,
Through all the several stages of your life,
Confirmed and settled in adoring you.

Isa. Nay, then, I must be gone. If you are my friend,
If you regard my little interest,
No more of this; you see, I grant you all
That friendship will allow: be still my friend;
That's all I can receive, or have to give.
I am going to my father; he needs not an excuse
To use me ill: pray leave me to the trial.

Vil. I am only born to be what you would have me,
The creature of your power, and must obey;
In every thing obey you. I am going:
But all good fortune go along with you. [*Exit.*

Isa. I shall need all your wishes—— [*Knocks.*
Locked! and fast!
Where is the charity that used to stand,
In our forefathers' hospitable days,
At great men's doors, ready for our wants,
Like the good angel of the family,
With open arms taking the needy in,
To feed and clothe, to comfort and relieve them?
Now even their gates are shut against their poor.

[*She knocks again.*

Enter SAMPSON *to her.*

Samp. Well, what's to do now, I trow? You knock as loud as if you were invited; and that is more than I heard of; but I can tell you, you may look twice about you for a welcome in a great man's family, before you find it, unless you bring it along with you.

Isa. I hope I bring my welcome along with me: Is your lord at home? Count Baldwin lives here still?

Samp. Ay, ay, Count Baldwin does live here; and I am his porter: but what's that to the purpose, good woman, of my lord's being at home?

Isa. Why, dont you know me, friend?

Samp. Not I, not I, mistress; I may have seen

you before, or so; but men of employment must forget their acquaintance; especially such as we are never to be the better for.

[*Going to shut the door, nurse enters, having overheard him.*

Nurse. Handsomer words would become you, and mend your manners, Sampson: do you know who you prate to?

Isa. I am glad you know me, nurse.

Nurse. Marry, Heaven forbid, madam, that I should ever forget you, or my little jewel: pray, go in—[*Isabella goes in with her child.*] Now my blessing go along with you wherever you go, or whatever you are about. Fie, Sampson, how couldst thou be such a Saracen! A Turk would have been a better Christian, than to have done so barbarously by a good lady.

Samp. Why look you, nurse, I know you of old: by your good-will you would have a finger in every body's pie: but mark the end of it; if I am called to account about it, I know what I have to say.

Nurse. Marry come up here! say your pleasure, and spare not. Refuse his eldest son's widow, and poor child, the comfort of seeing him? She does not trouble him so often.

Samp. Not that I am against it, nurse: but we are but servants, you know: we must have no likings, but our lord's; and must do as we are ordered.

Nurse. Nay, that's true, Sampson.

Samp. Besides, what I did was all for the best: I have no ill-will to the young lady, as a body may say, upon my own account; only that I hear she is poor; and indeed I naturally hate your decayed gentry: they expect as much waiting upon as when they had money in their pockets, and were able to consider us for the trouble.

Nurse. Why, that is a grievance indeed in great families, where the gifts, at good times, are better than the wages. It would do well to be reformed.

Samp. But what is the business, nurse? You have been in the family before I came into the world: what is the reason, pray, that this daughter-in-law, who has so good a report in every body's mouth, is so little set by, by my lord?

Nurse. Why, I tell you, Sampson, more or less: I will tell the truth, that's my way, you know, without adding or diminishing.

Samp. Ay, marry, nurse.

Nurse. My lord's eldest son, Biron by name, the son of his bosom, and the son that he would have loved best, if he had as many as king Pyramus of Troy——

Samp. How! King Pyramus of Troy! Why, how many had he?

Nurse. Why, the ballad sings he had fifty sons: but no matter for that. This Biron, as I was saying, was a lovely sweet gentleman, and, indeed, nobody could blame his father for loving him: he was a son for the king of Spain; God bless him, for I was his nurse. But now I come to the point, Sampson; this Biron, without asking the advice of his friends, hand over head, as young men will have their vagaries, not having the fear of his father before his eyes, as I may say, wilfully marries Isabella.

Samp. How, wilfully! he should have had her consent, methinks.

Nurse. No, wilfully marries her; and, which was worse, after she had settled all her fortune upon a nunnery, which she broke out of to run away with him. They say they had the church's forgiveness, but I had rather it had been his father's.

Samp. Why, in good truth, these nunneries I see no good they do. I think the young lady was in the right to run away from a nunnery: and I think our young master was not in the wrong but in marrying without a portion.

Nurse. That was the quarrel, I believe, Sampson: upon this, my old lord would never see him; disinherited him; took his younger brother, Carlos, into favour, whom he never cared for before; and at last forced Biron to go to the siege of Candy, where he was killed.

Samp. Alack-a-day, poor gentleman!

Nurse. For which my old lord hates her, as if she had been the cause of his going thither.

Samp. Alas, alas, poor lady! she has suffered for it: she has lived a great while a widow.

Nurse. A great while indeed, for a young woman, Sampson.

Samp. Gad so! here they come; I will not venture to be seen.

Enter COUNT BALDWIN, *followed by* ISABELLA *and her child.*

C. Bald. Whoever of your friends directed you,
Misguided and abused you—there's your way;
I can afford to shew you out again.
What could you expect from me?

Isa. Oh, I have nothing to expect on earth!
But misery is very apt to talk:
I thought I might be heard.

C. Bald. What can you say?
Is there in eloquence, can there be in words
A recompensing power, a remedy,
A reparation of the injuries,
The great calamities, that you have brought
On me and mine? You have destroyed those hopes
I fondly raised, through my declining life,
To rest my age upon; and most undone me.

Isa. I have undone myself too.

C. Bald. Speak it again!
Say still you are undone, and I will hear you,
With pleasure hear you,

Isa. Would my ruin please you?

C. Bald. Beyond all other pleasures.

Isa. Then you are pleased——for I am most undone.

C. Bald. I prayed but for revenge, and Heaven has heard,
And sent it to my wishes: these grey hairs
Would have gone down in sorrow to the grave,
Which you have dug for me, without the thought,
The thought of leaving you more wretched here.
Isa. Indeed I am most wretched——When I lost
My husband——
C. Bald. Would he had never been,
Or never had been yours!
Isa. I then believed
The measure of my sorrow then was full:
But every moment of my growing days
Makes room for woes, and adds them to the sum.
I lost with Biron all the joys of life:
But now its last supporting means are gone.
All the kind helps that Heaven in pity raised,
In charitable pity to our wants,
At last have left us: now bereft of all,
But this last trial of a cruel father,
To save us both from sinking. Oh, my child!
Kneel with me, knock at nature in his heart!
Let the resemblance of a once-loved son
Speak in this little one, who never wronged you,
And plead the fatherless and widow's cause!
Oh, if you ever hope to be forgiven,
As you will need to be forgiven too,
Forget our faults, that Heaven may pardon yours!
C. Bald. How dare you mention Heaven! Call to mind
Your perjured vows; your plighted, broken faith
To Heaven, and all things holy: were you not
Devoted, wedded to a life recluse,
The sacred habit on, professed and sworn,
A votary for ever? Can you think
The sacrilegious wretch, that robs the shrine,
Is thunder proof?
Isa. There, there, began my woes.
Let women all take warning at my fate;
Never resolve, or think they can be safe,
Within the reach and tongue of tempting men.
Oh! had I never seen my Biron's face,
Had he not tempted me, I had not fallen,
But still continued innocent and free
Of a bad world, which only he had power
To reconcile, and make me try again.
C. Bald. Your own inconstancy, your graceless thoughts,
Debauched and reconciled you to the world:
He had no hand to bring you back again,
But what you gave him. Circe, you prevailed
Upon his honest mind, transforming him
From virtue, and himself, into what shapes
You had occasion for; and what he did
Was first inspired by you. A cloister was
Too narrow for the work you had in hand:
Your business was more general; the whole world
To be the scene: therefore you spread your charms
To catch his soul, to be the instrument,
The wicked instrument, of your cursed flight.
Not that you valued him; for any one,
Who could have served the turn, had been as welcome.
Isa. Oh! I have sins to Heaven, but none to him.
C. Bald. Had my wretched son
Married a beggar's bastard; taken her
Out of her rags, and made her of my blood,
The mischief might have ceased, and ended there.
But bringing you into a family,
Entails a curse upon the name and house
That takes you in: the only part of me
That did receive you, perished for his crime.
'Tis a defiance to offended Heaven
Barely to pity you: your sins pursue you:
The heaviest judgments that can fall upon you,
Are your just lot, and but prepare your doom:
Expect them, and despair——Sirrah, rogue,
How durst thou disobey me! [*To the Porter.*
Isa. Not for myself——for I am past the hopes
Of being heard——but for this innocent——
And then I never will disturb you more.
C. Bald. I almost pity the unhappy child:
But being yours——
Isa. Look on him as your son's;
And let his part in him answer for mine,
Oh, save, defend him, save him from the wrongs,
That fall upon the poor!
C. Bald. It touches me——
And I will save him——But to keep him safe,
Never come near him more.
Isa. What! take him from me!
No, we must never part: 'tis the last hold
Of comfort I have left; and, when he fails,
All goes along with him: Oh! could you be
The tyrant to divorce life from my life?
I live but in my child.
No, let me pray in vain, and beg my bread
From door to door, to feed his daily wants,
Rather than always lose him.
C. Bald. Then have your child, and feed him with your prayers.
You, rascal, slave, what do I keep you for?
How came this woman in?
Samp. Why, indeed, my lord, I did as good as tell her, before, my thoughts upon the matter——
C. Bald. Did you so, sir? Now, then, tell her mine;
Tell her, I sent you to her.
[*Thrusts him towards her.*
Samp. Good my lord, what I did was in perfect obedience to the old nurse there. I told her what it would come to.
C. Bald, What! this was a plot upon me.—And you, too, beldam, were you in the conspiracy? Begone, go altogether: I have provided you an equipage, now set up when you please. She's

old enough to do your service; I have none for her. The wide world lies before you: begone! take any road but this to beg or starve in—I shall be glad to hear of you: but never, never see me more——

[*He drives them off before him.*

Isa. Then Heaven have mercy on me!

[*Exit with her child, followed by Sampson and nurse.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Continues.*

Enter VILLEROY *and* CARLOS, *meeting.*

Vil. My friend, I fear to ask——but Isabella——
The lovely widow's tears, her orphan's cries,
Thy father must feel for them——No, I read,
I read their cold reception in thine eyes——
Thou pitiest them—though Baldwin—but I spare him
For Carlos' sake; thou art no son of his.
There needs not this to endear thee more to me.
[*Embrace.*

Car. My Villeroy, the fatherless, the widow,
Are terms not understood within these gates—
You must forgive him, sir; he thinks this woman
Is Biron's fate, that hurried him to death——
I must not think on it, lest my friendship stagger.
My friend's, my sister's mutual advantage
Have reconciled my bosom to its task.

Vil. Advantage! think not I intend to raise
An interest from Isabella's wrongs.
Your father may have interested ends
In her undoing; but my heart has none:
Her happiness must be my interest,
And that I would restore.

Car. Why so I mean.
These hardships that my father lays upon her,
I am sorry for; and I wish I could prevent;
But he will have his way.
Since there's no hope from her prosperity, her change of fortune may alter the condition of her thoughts, and make for you.

Vil. She is above her fortune.

Car. Try her again. Women commonly love according to the circumstances they are in.

Vil. Common women may.

Car. Since you are not accessary to the injustice, you may be persuaded to take the advantage of other people's crimes.

Vil. I must despise all those advantages,
That indirectly can advance my love.
No, though I live but in the hopes of her,
And languish for the enjoyment of those hopes;
I'd rather pine in a consuming want
Of what I wish, than have the blessing mine,
From any reason but consenting love.
Oh! let me never have it to remember,
I could betray her coldly to comply!
When a clear generous choice bestows her on me,
I know to value the unequalled gift:
I would not have it, but to value it,

Car. Take your own way; remember what I offered came from a friend.

Vil. I understand it so. I'll serve her for herself, without the thought of a reward. [*Exit.*

Car. Agree that point between you. If you marry her any way, you do my business.
I know him—What his generous soul intends
Ripens my plots—I'll first to Isabella.——
I must keep up appearances with her too. [*Exit.*

SCENE II. *Isabella's house.*

Enter ISABELLA *and Nurse*: ISABELLA'S *little son at play upon the floor.*

Isa. Sooner, or later, all things pass away,
And are no more. The beggar and the king,
With equal steps, tread forward to their end:
The reconciling grave swallows distinction first, that made us foes.
Though they appear of different natures now,
They meet at last;
Then all alike lie down in peace together.
When will that hour of peace arrive for me?
In heaven I shall find it——not in heaven,
If my old tyrant father can dispose
Of things above—but, there, his interest
May be poor as mine, and want a friend
As much as I do here. [*Weeping.*

Nurse. Good madam, be comforted.

Isa. Do I deserve to be this outcast wretch;
Abandoned thus, and lost? But 'tis my lot,
The will of Heaven, and I must not complain:
I will not for myself: let me bear all
The violence of your wrath; but spare my child!
Let not my sins be visited on him!
They are, they must; a general ruin falls
On every thing about me: thou art lost,
Poor nurse, by being near me.

Nurse. I can work, or beg, to do you service.

Isa. Could I forget
What I have been, I might the better bear
What I am destined to: I am not the first
That have been wretched: but to think how much
I have been happier! Wild hurrying thoughts
Start every way from my distracted soul,
To find out hope, and only meet despair.
What answer have I?

Enter SAMPSON.

Samp. Why truly, very little to the purpose; like a Jew as he is, he says you have had more already than the jewels are worth: he wishes

you would rather think of redeeming them, than expect any more money upon them.

[*Exit Sampson.*

Isa. 'Tis very well——
So: poverty at home, and debts abroad!
My present fortune bad; my hopes yet worse!
What will become of me?
This ring is all I have left of value now:
'Twas given me by my husband: his first gift
Upon our marriage: I have always kept it,
With my best care, the treasure next my life:
And now but part with it to support life,
Which only can be dearer. Take it, nurse;
'Twill stop the cries of hunger for a time,
Provide us bread, and bring a short reprieve,
To put off the bad day of beggary,
That will come on too soon. Take care of it:
Manage it as the last remaining friend
That would relieve us. [*Exit Nurse.*] Heaven can only tell
Where we shall find another——My dear boy!
The labour of his birth was lighter to me
Than of my fondness now; my fears for him
Are worse, than in that hour of hovering death,
They could be for myself——He minds me not,
His little sports have taken up his thoughts:
Oh, may they never feel the pangs of mine!
Thinking will make me mad: why must I think,
When no thought brings me comfort?

Nurse returns.

Nurse. Oh, madam! you are utterly ruined and undone; your creditors of all kinds are come in upon you: they have mustered up a regiment of rogues, that are come to plunder your house, and seize upon all you have in the world; they are below. What will you do, madam?

Isa. Do! nothing; no, for I am born to suffer.

Enter CARLOS *to her.*

Car. Oh, sister! can I call you by that name,
And be the son of this inhuman man,
Inveterate to your ruin? Do not think
I am a-kin to his barbarity:
I must abhor my father's usage of you;
And from my bleeding honest heart must pity,
Pity your lost condition. Can you think
Of any way that I may serve you in?
But what enrages most my sense of grief,
My sorrow for your wrongs, is, that my father,
Fore-knowing well the storm that was to fall,
Has ordered me not to appear for you.

Isa. I thank your pity; my poor husband fell
For disobeying him; do not you stay
To venture his displeasure too for me.

Car. You must resolve on something——

[*Exit.*

Isa. Let my fate
Determine for me; I shall be prepared.
The worst that can befall me, is to die: [*A noise.*
When once it comes to that, it matters not
Which way 'tis brought about: whether I starve,
Or hang, or drown, the end is still the same;
Plagues, poison, famine, are but several names
Of the same thing, and all conclude in death.
But sudden death! Oh, for a sudden death,
To cheat my persecutors of their hopes,
The expected pleasure of beholding me
Long in my pains, lingering in misery.
It will not be, that is denied me too.
Hark! they are coming; let the torrent roar!
It can but overwhelm me in its fall;
And life and death are now alike to me.

[*Exeunt, the nurse leading the child.*

SCENE III.—*Opens, and shews* CARLOS *and* VILLEROY *with the officers.*

Vil. No farther violence——
The debt in all is but four thousand crowns:
Were it ten times the sum, I think you know
My fortune very well can answer it.
You have my word for this: I will see you paid.

Offi. That's as much as we can desire: so we have the money, no matter whence it comes.

Vil. To-morrow you shall have it.

Car. Thus far all's well——

Enter ISABELLA, *and nurse, with the child.*

And now my sister comes to crown the work.

[*Aside.*

Isa. Where are the raving blood-hounds, that pursue
In a full cry, gaping to swallow me?
I meet your rage, and come to be devoured:
Say, which way are you to dispose of me?
To dungeons, darkness, death!

Car. Have patience.

Isa. Patience!

Offi. You will excuse us, we are but in our office:
Debts must be paid.

Isa. My death will pay you all. [*Distractedly.*

Offi. While there is law to be had, people will have their own.

Vil. 'Tis very fit they should; but pray be gone.
To-morrow certainly—— [*Exeunt officers.*

Isa. What of to-morrow?
Am I then the sport,
The game of fortune, and her laughing fools?
The common spectacle, to be exposed
From day to day, and baited for the mirth
Of the lewd rabble? Must I be reserved
For fresh afflictions?

Vil. For long happiness
Of life, I hope.

Isa. There is no hope for me.
The load glows light, when we resolve to bear
I am ready for my trial.

Car. Pray be calm,
And know your friends.

Isa. My friends! Have I a friend?

Car. A faithful friend; in your extremest need,
Villeroy came in to save you——
Isa. Save me! How?
Car. By satisfying all your creditors.
Isa. Which way? For what?
Vil. Let me be understood,
And then condemn me: you have given me leave
To be your friend; and in that only name
I now appear before you. I could wish
There had been no occasion for a friend,
Because I know you hate to be obliged;
And still more loth to be obliged by me.
Isa. 'Twas that I would avoid—— [*Aside.*
Vil. I am most unhappy that my services
Can be suspected to design upon you;
I have no farther ends than to redeem you
From fortune's wrongs; to shew myself at last,
What I have long professed to be, your friend:
Allow me that; and to convince you more
That I intend only your interest,
Forgive what I have done, and in amends
(If that can make you any, that can please you)
I will tear myself for ever from my hopes,
Stifle this flaming passion in my soul,
That has so long broke out to trouble you,
And mention my unlucky love no more.
Isa. This generosity will ruin me. [*Aside.*
Vil. Nay, if the blessing of my looking on you
Disturbs your peace, I will do all I can
To keep away, and never see you more.
Car. You must not go.
Vil. Could Isabella speak
Those few short words, I should be rooted here,
And never move but upon her commands.
Car. Speak to him, sister; do not throw away
A fortune that invites you to be happy.
In your extremity he begs your love;
And has deserved it nobly. Think upon
Your lost condition, helpless and alone.
Though now you have a friend, the time must come
That you will want one; him you may secure
To be a friend, a father, husband to you.
Isa. A husband!
Car. You have discharged your duty to the dead,
And to the living; 'tis a wilfulness
Not to give way to your necessities,
That force you to this marriage.
Nurse. What must become of this poor innocence? [*To the child.*
Car. He wants a father to protect his youth,
And rear him up to virtue: you must bear
The future blame, and answer to the world,
When you refuse the easy honest means
Of taking care of him.
Nurse. Of him and me,
And every one that must depend upon you:
Unless you please now to provide for us,
We must all perish.
Car. Nor would I press you——
Isa. Do not think I need
Your reasons, to confirm my gratitude;
I have a soul that's truly sensible
Of your great worth, and busy to contrive,
[*To Villeroy.*
If possible, to make you a return.
Vil. Oh! easily possible!
Isa. It cannot be your way: my pleasures are
Buried, and cold in my dead husband's grave;
And I should wrong the truth, myself, and you,
To say that I can ever love again.
I owe this declaration to myself:
But, as a proof that I owe all to you,
If, after what I have said, you can resolve
To think me worth your love——Where am I going?
You cannot think it; 'tis impossible.
Vil. Impossible!
Isa. You should not ask me now, nor should I grant;
I am so much obliged, that to consent
Would want a name to recommend the gift:
'Twould show me poor, indebted, and compelled,
Designing, mercenary; and I know
You would not wish to think I could be bought.
Vil. Be bought! where is the price that can pretend
To bargain for you! Not in fortune's power.
The joys of Heaven and love must be bestowed;
They are not to be sold, and cannot be deserved.
Isa. Some other time I will hear you on this subject.
Vil. Nay, then, there is no time so fit for me.
[*Following her.*
Since you consent to hear me, hear me now;
That you may grant: you are above
The little forms which circumscribe your sex;
We differ but in time, let that be mine.
Isa. You think fit
To get the better of me, and you shall;
Since you will have it so——I will be yours.
Vil. I take you at your word.
Isa. I give you all——
My hand; and would I had a heart to give!
But if it ever can return again,
'Tis wholly yours.
Vil. Oh, ecstacy of joy!
Leave that to me. If all my services,
If prosperous days, and kind indulging nights,
If all that man can fondly say or do,
Can beget love, love shall be born again.
Oh, Carlos! now my friend, and brother too!
And, nurse, I have eternal thanks for thee.
Send for the priest——
[*Nurse goes out in haste.*
This night you must be mine.
Let me command in this, and all my life
Shall be devoted to you.
Isa. On your word,
Never to press me to put off these weeds,
Which best become my melancholy thoughts,
You shall command me,
Vil. Witness Heaven and earth

Against my soul, when I do any thing
To give you a disquiet.
Car. I long to wish you joy.
Vil. You'll be a witness of my happiness?
Car. For once I'll be my sister's father,
And give her to you.
Vil. Next my Isabella,
Be near my heart: I am for ever yours. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Count* BALDWIN'S *house.*

Enter COUNT BALDWIN *and* CARLOS.

C. Bald. MARRIED to Villeroy, say'st thou?
Car. Yes, my lord.
Last night the priest performed his holy office,
And made them one.
C. Bald. Misfortune join them!
And may her violated vows pull down
A lasting curse, a constancy of sorrow,
On both their heads!—I have not yet forgot
Thy slighted passion, the refused alliance;
But having her, we are revenged at full.
Heaven will pursue her still, and Villeroy
Share the judgments she calls down.
Car. Soon he'll hate her,
Though warm and violent in his raptures now.
When full enjoyment palls his sickened sense,
And reason, with satiety, returns,
Her cold constrained acceptance of his hand
Will gall his pride, which (though of late o'erpowered
By stronger passions) will, as they grow weak,
Rise in full force, and pour its vengeance on her.
C. Bald. Now, Carlos, take example to thy aid!
Let Biron's disobedience, and the curse
He took into his bosom, prove a warning,
A monitor to thee, to keep thy duty
Firm and unshaken.
Car. May those rankling wounds,
Which Biron's disobedience gave my father,
Be healed by me!
C. Bald. With tears I thank thee, Carlos——
And may'st thou ever feel those inward joys,
Thy duty gives thy father—but, my son,
We must not let resentment choak our justice;
'Tis fit that Villeroy know he has no claim
From me, in right of Isabella——Biron
(Whose name brings tears), when wedded to this woman,
By me abandoned, sunk the little fortune
His uncle left, in vanity and fondness:
I am possest of those your brother's papers,
Which now are Villeroy's; and should aught remain,
In justice it is his; from me to him
You shall convey them——follow me, and take them. [*Exit C. Baldwin.*
Car. Yes, I will take them; but ere I part with them,
I will be sure my interest will not suffer
By these his high, refined, fantastic notions
Of equity and right.—What a paradox
Is man! My father here, who boasts his honour,
And even but now was warm in praise of justice,
Can steel his heart against the widow's tears,
And infant's wants; the widow and the infant
Of Biron; of his son, his favourite son.
'Tis ever thus weak minds, who court opinion,
And dead to virtuous feeling, hide their wants
In pompous affectation.—Now to Villeroy——
Ere this his friends, for he is much beloved,
Crowd to his house, and with their nuptial songs
Awake the wedded pair: I'll join the throng,
And in my face, at least, bear joy and friendship.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*A hall in* VILLEROY'S *house. A band of music, with the friends of* VILLEROY.

Enter a Servant.

1*st F.* Where's your master, my good friend?
Ser. Within, sir,
Preparing for the welcome of his friends.
1*st F.* Acquaint him we are here: yet stay,
The voice of music gently shall surprise him,
And breathe our salutations to his ear.
Strike up the strain to Villeroy's happiness,
To Isabella's—But he's here already.

Enter VILLEROY.

Vil. My friends, let me embrace you:
Welcome all——
What means this preparation? [*Seeing the music.*
1*st F.* A slight token
Of our best wishes for your growing happiness—
You must permit our friendship——
Vil. You oblige me——
1*st F.* But your lovely bride,
That wonder of her sex, she must appear,
And add new brightness to this happy morning.
Vil. She is not yet prepared; and let her will,
My worthiest friend, determine her behaviour;
To win, and not to force, her disposition,
Has been my seven years task. She will, anon,
Speak welcome to you all. The music stays.
[*Villeroy and his Friends seat themselves.*

EPITHALAMIUM.

AIR.

Woman. *Let all, let all be gay,*
Begin the rapturous lay;
Let mirth, let mirth and joy,
Each happy hour employ
Of this fair bridal day.

Man. *Ye love-winged hours, your flight,*
Your downy flight prepare,
Bring every soft delight
To soothe the brave and fair.
Hail, happy pair, thus in each other blest;
Be ever free from care, of every joy possessed!

Vil. I thank you for this proof of your affection:
I am so much transported with the thoughts
Of what I am, I know not what I do.
My Isabella!—but possessing her,
Who would not lose himself?——You'll pardon me——
Oh! there was nothing wanting to my soul,
But the kind wishes of my loving friends——
But our collation waits: where's Carlos now?
Methinks I am but half myself without him.

2d F. This is wonderful! Married a night and a day, and yet in raptures!

Vil. Oh! when you all get wives, and such as mine
(If such another woman can be found),
You will rave too, dote on the dear content,
And prattle in their praise out of all bounds.
I cannot speak my bliss! 'Tis in my head,
'Tis in my heart, and takes up all my soul——
The labour of my fancy. You'll pardon me;
About some twelve months hence I may begin
To speak plain sense—Walk in, and honour me.

Enter ISABELLA.

My Isabella! Oh, the joy of my heart,
That I have leave, at last, to call you mine!
When I give up that title to the charms
Of any other wish, be nothing mine:
But let me look upon you, view you well.
This is a welcome gallantry indeed!
I durst not ask, but it was kind to grant,
Just at this time; dispensing with your dress
Upon this second day to greet our friends.

Isa. Black might be ominous;
I would not bring ill luck along with me.

Vil. Oh! if your melancholy thoughts could change
With shifting of your dress—Time has done cures
Incredible this way, and may again.

Isa. I could have wished, if you had thought it fit,
Our marriage had not been so public.

Vil. Do not you grudge me my excess of love;
That was a cause it could not be concealed:
Besides, it would injure the opinion
I have of my good fortune, having you,
And lessen it in other peoples' thoughts,
Busy, on such occasions, to enquire,
Had it been private.

Isa. I have no more to say.

Enter CARLOS.

Vil. My Carlos too, who came in to the support
Of our bad fortune, has an honest right,
In better times, to share the good with us.

Car. I come to claim that right, to share your joy;
To wish you joy; and find it in myself:
For a friend's happiness reflects a warmth,
A kindly comfort, into every heart
That is not envious.

Vil. He must be a friend,
Who is not envious of a happiness
So absolute as mine; but if you are
(As I have reason to believe you are)
Concerned for my well-being, there's the cause;
Thank her for what I am, and what must be.
[*Music flourish:*
I see you mean a second entertainment.
My dearest Isabella, you must hear
The raptures of my friends; from thee they spring;
Thy virtues have diffused themselves around,
And made them all as happy as myself.

Isa. I feel their favours with a grateful heart,
And willingly comply.

RECITATIVE.

Take the gifts the gods intend ye;
Grateful meet the proffered joy:
Truth and honour shall attend ye;
Charms that ne'er can change or cloy.

DUETTO.

Man. *Oh, the raptures of possessing,*
Taking beauty to thy arms!
Woman. *Oh, the joy, the lasting blessing,*
When with virtue beauty charms!
Man. *Purer flames shall gently warm ye;*
Woman. *Love and honour both shall charm thee.*
Both. *Oh, the raptures of, &c. &c.*

CHORUS.

Far from hence be care and strife,
Far the pang that tortures life:
May the circling minutes prove
One sweet round of peace and love!

Car. 'Tis fine, indeed!
You'll take my advice another time, sister.

Vil. What have you done? A rising smile
Stole from her thoughts, just red'ning on her cheek,
And you have dashed it.

Car. I'm sorry for it.

Vil. My friends, you will forgive me, when I own,
I must prefer her peace to all the world.
Come, Isabella, let us lead the way:
Within we'll speak our welcome to our friends,
And crown the happy festival with joy. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*A room.*

Enter SAMPSON *and nurse.*

Samp. Ay, marry, nurse, here's a master indeed! He will double our wages for us! If he

comes on as fast with my lady, as he does with his servants, we are all in the way to be well pleased.

Nurse. He is in a rare humour; if she be in as good a one———

Samp. If she be, marry, we may even say, they have begot it upon one another.

Nurse. Well; why do not you go back again to your old count? You thought your throat cut, I warrant you, to be turned out of a nobleman's service.

Samp. For the future, I will never serve in a house where the master or mistress of it lie single: they are out of humour with every body when they are not pleased themselves. Now, this matrimony makes every thing go well. There's mirth and money stirring about, when those matters go as they should do.

Nurse. Indeed, this matrimony, Sampson——

Samp. Ah, nurse! this matrimony is a very good thing——but, what, now my lady is married, I hope we shall have company come to the house: there's something always coming from one gentleman or other upon those occasions, if my lady loves company. This feasting looks well, Nurse.

Nurse. Odso, my master! we must not be seen. [*Exeunt.*

Enter VILLEROY *with a letter, and* ISABELLA.

Vil. I must away this moment—see his letter,
Signed by himself: alas! he could no more;
My brother's desperate, and cannot die
In peace, but in my arms.
Isa. So suddenly!
Vil. Suddenly taken, on the road to Brussels;
To do us honour, love; unfortunate!
Thus to be torn from thee, and all those charms,
Though cold to me and dead.
Isa. I'm sorry for the cause.
Vil. Oh! could I think,
Could I persuade myself that your concern
For me, or for my absence, were the spring,
The fountain of these melancholy thoughts,
My heart would dance, spite of the sad occasion,
And be a gay companion in my journey;
But———

Enter CARLOS *from supper.*

My good Carlos, why have you left my friends?
Car. They are departed home.
They saw some sudden melancholy news
Had stolen the lively colour from your cheek——
You had withdrawn, the bride, alarmed, had followed:
Mere ceremony had been constraint; and this
Good-natured rudeness——
Vil. Was the more obliging.
There, Carlos, is the cause. [*Gives the letter,*
Car. Unlucky accident!
The Archbishop of Malins, your worthy brother—
With him to-night! Sister, will you permit it?
Vil. It must be so.
Isa. You hear it must be so.
Vil. Oh, that it must!
Car. To leave your bride so soon!
Vil. But having the possession of my love,
I am the better able to support
My absence, in the hopes of my return.
Car. Your stay will be but short?
Vil. It will seem long!
The longer that my Isabella sighs;
I shall be jealous of this rival, grief,
That you indulge and fondle in my absence.
It takes so full possession of thy heart,
There is not room enough for mighty love.

Enter Servant, and bows.

My horses wait: farewell, my love! You, Carlos,
Will act a brother's part, 'till I return,
And be the guardian here. All, all I have,
That's dear to me, I give up to your care.
Car. And I receive her as a friend and brother.
Vil. Nay, stir not, love! for the night air is cold,
And the dews fall—Here be our end of parting;
Carlos will see me to my horse.
[*Exit with Carlos.*
Isa. Oh, may thy brother better all thy hopes!
Adieu.
A sudden melancholy bakes my blood!
Forgive me, Villeroy——I do not find
That cheerful gratitude thy service asks:
Yet, if I know my heart, and sure I do,
'Tis not averse from honest obligation.
I'll to my chamber, and to bed; my mind,
My harassed mind, is weary. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Street.*

Enter BIRON *and* BELFORD, *just arrived.*

Bir. THE longest day will have an end; we are got home at last.

Bel. We have got our legs at liberty; and liberty is home wherever we go; though mine lies most in England.

Bir. Pray let me call this yours: for what I can command in Brussels, you shall find your own. I have a father here, who, perhaps, after seven years absence, and costing him nothing in my travels, may be glad to see me. You know my story—How does my disguise become me?

Bel. Just as you would have it; 'tis natural, and will conceal you.

Bir. To-morrow you shall be sure to find me here, as early as you please. This is the house; you have observed the street.

Bel. I warrant you; I have not many visits to make before I come to you.

Bir. To-night I have some affairs that will oblige me to be in private.

Bel. A good bed is the privatest affair that I desire to be engaged in to-night; your directions will carry me to my lodgings. [*Exit.*

Bir. Good night, my friend. [*Knocks.*
The long expected moment is arrived!
And if all here is well, my past sorrows
Will only heighten my excess of joy;
And nothing will remain to wish or hope for!
[*Knocks again.*

Enter SAMPSON.

Samp. Who's there! What would you have?

Bir. Is your lady at home, friend?

Samp. Why, truly, friend, it is my employment to answer impertinent questions: but, for my lady's being at home, or no, that's just as my lady pleases.

Bir. But how shall I know whether it pleases her or no?

Samp. Why, if you will take my word for it, you may carry your errand back again; she never pleases to see any body at this time of night that she does not know; and by your dress and appearance I am sure you must be a stranger to her.

Bir. But I have business; and you don't know how that may please her.

Samp. Nay, if you have business, she is the best judge whether your business will please her or no; therefore I will proceed in my office, and know of my lady whether or no she is pleased to be at home, or no—— [*Going.*

Enter Nurse.

Nurse. Who's that you are so busy withal? Methinks, you might have found out an answer in fewer words; but, Sampson, you love to hear yourself prate sometimes, as well as your betters. that I must say for you. Let me come to him. Who would you speak with, stranger?

Bir. With you, mistress, if you could help me to speak to your lady.

Nurse. Yes, sir, I can help you in a civil way: but can nobody do your business but my lady?

Bir. Not so well; but if you carry her this ring, she will know my business better.

Nurse. There's no love-letter in it, I hope; you look like a civil gentleman. In an honest way, I may bring you an answer. [*Exit.*

Bir. My old nurse, only a little older! They say the tongue grows always: mercy on me! then hers is seven years longer since I left her. Yet there's something in these servants' folly pleases me; the cautious conduct of the family appears, and speaks in their impertinence. Well, mistress——

Nurse returns.

Nurse. I have delivered your ring, sir. Pray Heaven you bring no bad news along with you!

Bir. Quite the contrary, I hope.

Nurse. Nay, I hope so too; but my lady was very much surprised when I gave it her. Sir, I am but a servant, as a body may say; but if you walk in, that I may shut the doors, for we keep very orderly hours, I can shew you into the parlour, and help you to an answer, perhaps as soon as those that are wiser. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A chamber.*

Enter ISABELLA.

Isa. I have heard of witches, magic spells, and charms,
That have made nature start from her old course:
The sun has been eclipsed, the moon drawn down
From her career, still paler, and subdued
To the abuses of this under world!
Now, I believe all possible. This ring,
This little ring, with necromantic force,
Has raised the ghost of pleasure to my fears:
Conjured the sense of honour, and of love,
Into such shapes, they fright me from myself!
I dare not think of them—
I'll call you when I want you. [*Servant goes out.*

Enter Nurse.

Nurse. Madam, the gentleman's below.

Isa. I had forgot, pray let me speak with him. [*Exit Nurse.*
This ring was the first present of my love
To Biron, my first husband; I must blush
To think I have a second. Biron died
(Still to my loss) at Candy; there's my hope.

†

Oh, do I live to hope that he died there!
It must be so: he's dead, and this ring left
By his last breath to some known faithful friend,
To bring me back again;
[*Biron introduced—Nurse retires.*
That's all I have to trust to—
My fears were woman's—I have viewed him all:
And let me, let me say it to myself,
I live again, and rise but from his tomb.
Bir. Have you forgot me quite?
Isa. Forgot you!
Bir. Then farewell my disguise, and my misfortunes!
My Isabella!
[*He goes to her; she shrieks, and falls in a swoon.*]
Isa. Ha!
Bir. Oh! come again!
Thy Biron summons thee to life and love;
Once I had charms to wake thee:
Thy once loved, ever-loving husband calls—
Thy Biron speaks to thee.
Isa. My husband! Biron?
Bir. Excess of love and joy, for my return,
Has overpowered her. I was to blame
To take thy sex's softness unprepared:
But sinking thus, thus dying in my arms,
This ecstacy has made my welcome more
Than words could say: words may be counterfeit,
False-coined, and current only from the tongue,
Without the mind; but passion's in the soul,
And always speaks the heart.
Isa. Where have I been! Why do you keep him from me?
I know his voice: my life upon the wing,
Here's the soft lure that brings me back again;
'Tis he himself, my Biron, the dear man!
My true-loved husband! Do I hold you fast,
Never to part again? Can I believe it?
Nothing but you could work so great a change;
There's more than life itself in dying here.
If I must fall, death's welcome in these arms.
Bir. Live ever in these arms!
Isa. But pardon me,
Excuse the wild disorder of my soul:
The joy, the strange surprising joy of seeing you,
Of seeing you again, distracted me——
Bir. Thou everlasting goodness!
Isa. Answer me:
What hand of Providence has brought you back
To your own home again? O, satisfy
The impatience of my heart: I long to know
The story of your sufferings. You would think
Your pleasures sufferings, so long removed
From Isabella's love. But tell me all,
For every thought confounds me.
Bir. My best life! at leisure, all.
Isa. We thought you dead; killed at the siege of Candy.
Bir. There I fell among the dead;
But hopes of life reviving from my wounds,
I was preserved but to be made a slave:
I often writ to my hard father, but never had
An answer; I writ to thee too——
Isa. What a world of woe
Had been prevented but in hearing from you!
Bir. Alas! thou couldst not help me!
Isa. You do not know how much I could have done;
At least, I'm sure I could have suffered all:
I would have sold myself to slavery,
Without redemption; given up my child,
The dearest part of me, to basest wants——
Bir. My little boy!
Isa. My life, but to have heard
You were alive—which now, too late, I find.
[*Aside.*
Bir. No more, my love. Complaining of the past,
We lose the present joy. 'Tis over price
Of all my pains, that thus we meet again——
I have a thousand things to say to thee——
Isa. Would I were past the hearing! [*Aside.*
Bir. How does my child, my boy, my father too?
I hear he's living still.
Isa. Well both, both well;
And may he prove a father to your hopes,
Though we have found him none!
Bir. Come, no more tears.
Isa. Seven long years of sorrow for your loss,
Have mourned with me——
Bir. And all my days behind
Shall be employed in a kind recompence
For thy afflictions.—Can't I see my boy?
Isa. He's gone to bed: I'll have him brought to you.
Bir. To-morrow I shall see him; I want rest
Myself, after this weary pilgrimage.
Isa. Alas! what shall I get for you?
Bir. Nothing but rest, my love! To-night I would not
Be known, if possible, to your family:
I see my nurse is with you; her welcome
Would be tedious at this time;
To-morrow will do better.
Isa. I'll dispose of her, and order every thing
As you would have it. [*Exit.*
Bir. Grant me but life, good Heaven, and give the means,
To make this wondrous goodness some amends:
And let me then forget her, if I can!
O! she deserves of me much more than I
Can lose for her, though I again could venture
A father, and his fortune, for her love!
You wretched fathers, blind as fortune all!
Not to perceive that such a woman's worth
Weighs down the portions you provide your sons:
What is your trash, what all your heaps of gold,
Compared to this, my heart-felt happiness?
[*Bursts into tears.*
What has she, in my absence, undergone?

I must not think of that; it drives me back
Upon myself, the fatal cause of all.

ISABELLA *returns.*

Isa. I have obeyed your pleasure;
Every thing is ready for you.
Bir. I can want nothing here; possessing thee,
All my desires are carried to their aim
Of happiness; there's no room for a wish,
But to continue still this blessing to me:
I know the way, my love; I shall sleep sound.
Isa. Shall I attend you?
Bir. By no means;
I've been so long a slave to others' pride,
To learn, at least, to wait upon myself;
You'll make haste after—— [*Goes in.*
Isa. I'll but say my prayers, and follow you—
My prayers! no, I must never pray again.
Prayers have their blessings to reward our hopes,
But I have nothing left to hope for more.
What Heaven could give, I have enjoyed; but now
The baneful planet rises on my fate,
And what's to come is a long line of woe.
Yet I may shorten it———
I promised him to follow—him!
Is he without a name? Biron, my husband,
To follow him to bed———my husband! ha!
What then is Villeroy? But yesterday
That very bed received him for its lord,
Yet a warm witness of my broken vows.
Oh, Biron, hadst thou come but one day sooner,
I would have followed thee through beggary,
Through all the chances of this weary life:
Wandered the many ways of wretchedness
With thee, to find a hospitable grave;
For that's the only bed that's left me now.
[*Weeping.*
——What's to be done?—for something must be done.
Two husbands! yet not one! By both enjoyed,
And yet a wife to neither! Hold my brain——
This is to live in common! Very beasts,
That welcome all they meet, make just such wives.
My reputation! Oh, 'twas all was left me!
The virtuous pride of an uncensured life;
Which the dividing tongues of Biron's wrongs,
And Villeroy's resentments, tear asunder,
To gorge the throats of the blaspheming rabble.
This is the best of what can come to-morrow,
Besides old Baldwin's triumph in my ruin:
I cannot bear it———
Therefore no morrow: Ha! a lucky thought
Works the right way to rid me of them all;
All the reproaches, infamies, and scorns,
That every tongue and finger will find for me.
Let the just horror of my apprehensions
But keep me warm—no matter what can come.
'Tis but a blow—yet I will see him first—
Have a last look to heighten my despair,
And then to rest for ever.——

BIRON *meets her.*

Bir. Despair and rest for ever! Isabella!
These words are far from thy condition,
And be they ever so! I heard thy voice,
And could not bear thy absence: come, my love!
You have staid long; there's nothing, nothing sure
Now to despair of in succeeding fate.
Isa. I am contented to be miserable,
But not this way: I have been too long abused,
And can believe no more.
Let me sleep on to be deceived no more.
Bir. Look up, my love! I never did deceive thee,
Nor never can; believe thyself, thy eyes,
That first inflamed, and lit me to my love;
Those stars, that still must guide me to my joys——
Isa. And me to my undoing: I look round,
And find no path, but leading to the grave.
Bir. I cannot understand thee.
Isa. My good friends above,
I thank them, have at last found out a way
To make my fortune perfect; having you,
I need no more; my fate is finished here.
Bir. Both our ill fates, I hope.
Isa. Hope is a lying, fawning flatterer,
That shews the fair side only of our fortunes,
To cheat us easier into our fall;
A trusted friend, who only can betray you;
Never believe him more. If marriages
Are made in Heaven, they would be happier:
Why was I made this wretch?
Bir. Has marriage made thee wretched?
Isa. Miserable, beyond the reach of comfort.
Bir. Do I live to hear thee say so?
Isa. Why, what did I say?
Bir. That I have made thee miserable.
Isa. No: you are my only earthly happiness;
And my false tongue belied my honest heart,
If it said otherwise.
Bir. And yet you said,
Your marriage made you miserable.
Isa. I know not what I said:
I have said too much, unless I could speak all.
Bir. Thy words are wild; my eyes, my ears, my heart,
Were all so full of thee, so much employed
In wonder of thy charms, I could not find it:
Now I perceive it plain——
Isa. You will tell nobody—— [*Distractedly.*
Bir. Thou art not well.
Isa. Indeed I am not; I knew that before;
But where's the remedy?
Bir. Rest will relieve thy cares: come, come, no more;
I will banish sorrow from thee.
Isa. Banish first the cause.
Bir. Heaven knows how willingly!
Isa. You are the only cause.

Bir. Am I the cause? the cause of thy misfortunes?
Isa. The fatal innocent cause of all my woes.
Bir. Is this my welcome home? This the reward
Of all my miseries, long labours, pains,
And pining wants of wretched slavery,
Which I have outlived, only in hopes of thee:
Am I thus paid at last for deathless love,
And called the cause of thy misfortunes now?
Isa. Enquire no more; 'twill be explained too soon. [*She is going off.*
Bir. What! canst thou leave me too? [*He stays her.*
Isa. Pray, let me go:
For both our sakes, permit me——
Bir. Rack me not with imaginations
Of things impossible——Thou canst not mean
What thou hast said——Yet something she must mean.——
'Twas madness all——Compose thyself, my love!
The fit is past; all may be well again:
Let us to bed.
Isa. To bed! You have raised the storm
Will sever us for ever. Oh, Biron!
While I have life, still I must call you mine:
I know I am, and always was, unworthy
To be the happy partner of your love;
And now must never, never share it more.
But oh! if ever I was dear to you,
As sometimes you have thought me, on my knees,
(The last time I shall care to be believed)
I beg you, beg to think me innocent,
Clear of all crimes, that thus can banish me
From this world's comforts, in my losing you.
Bir. Where will this end?
Isa. The rugged hand of fate has got between
Our meeting hearts, and thrusts them from their joys.
Since we must part——
Bir. Nothing shall ever part us.
Isa. Parting's the least that is set down for me:
Heaven has decreed, and we must suffer all.
Bir. I know thee innocent: I know myself so:
Indeed we both have been unfortunate;
But sure misfortunes ne'er were faults in love.
Isa. Oh! there's a fatal story to be told;
Be deaf to that, as Heaven has been to me!
And rot the tongue that shall reveal my shame:
When thou shall hear how much thou hast been wronged,
How wilt thou curse thy fond believing heart,
Tear me from the warm bosom of thy love,
And throw me like a poisonous weed away!
Can I bear that? Bear to be curst and torn,
And thrown out of thy family and name,
Like a disease? Can I bear this from thee?
I never can: no, all things have their end.
When I am dead, forgive and pity me. [*Exit.*
Bir. Stay, my Isabella——
What can she mean? These doubtings will distract me:
Some hidden mischief soon will burst to light;
I cannot bear it——I must be satisfied——
'Tis she, my wife, must clear this darkness to me.
She shall—if the sad tale at last must come!
She is my fate, and best can speak my doom.
[*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter BIRON. *Nurse following him.*

Bir. I know enough: the important question
Of life or death, fearful to be resolved,
Is cleared to me: I see where it must end;
And need enquire no more——Pray, let me have
Pen, ink, and paper. I must write a-while,
And then I will try to rest——to rest for ever!
[*Exit Nurse.*
Poor Isabella! now I know the cause,
The cause of thy distress, and cannot wonder
That it has turned thy brain. If I look back
Upon thy loss, it will distract me too.
Oh, any curse but this might be removed!
But 'twas the rancorous malignity
Of all ill-stars combined, of heaven and fate—
Hold, hold my impious tongue—Alas! I rave:
Why do I tax the stars, or heaven, or fate?
They are all innocent of driving us
Into despair; they have not urged my doom;
My father and my brother are my fates,
That drive me to my ruin. They knew well
I was alive. Too well they knew how dear
My Isabella—Oh, my wife no more!
How dear her love was to me—Yet they stood,
With a malicious silent joy, stood by,
And saw her give up all my happiness,
The treasure of her beauty to another;
Stood by, and saw her married to another.
Oh, cruel father! and unnatural brother!
Shall I not tell you that you have undone me!
I have but to accuse you of my wrongs,
And then to fall forgotten——Sleep or death
Sits heavy on me, and benumbs my pains:
Either is welcome; but the hand of death
Works always sure, and best can close my eyes.
[*Exit Biron.*

Enter Nurse and SAMPSON.

Nurse. Here's strange things towards, Sampson: what will be the end of them, do you think?
Samp. Nay, marry, nurse, I cannot see so far;

but the law, I believe, is on Biron, the first husband's side.

Nurse. Yes; no question, he has the law on his side.

Samp. For I have heard, the law says, a woman must be a widow, all out seven years, before she can marry again, according to law.

Nurse. Ay, so it does; and our lady has not been a widow, altogether, seven years.

Samp. Why, then, nurse, mark my words, and say I told you so. The man must have his wife again, and all will do well.

Nurse. But if our master, Villeroy, comes back again——

Samp. Why, if he does, he is not the first man that has had his wife taken from him.

Nurse. For fear of the worst, will you go to the old count, and desire him to come as soon as he can; there may be mischief, and he is able to prevent it.

Samp. Now you say something; now I take you, nurse; that will do well, indeed: mischief should be prevented; a little thing will make a quarrel, when there's a woman in the way. I will about it instantly. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Draws, shews* BIRON *asleep on a couch.*

Enter ISABELLA.

Isa. Asleep so soon! Oh, happy! happy thou,
Who thus can sleep! I never shall sleep more—
If then to sleep be to be happy, he,
Who sleeps the longest, is the happiest;
Death is the longest sleep—Oh, have a care!
Mischief will thrive apace. Never wake more.
[*To Biron.*
If thou didst ever love thy Isabella,
To-morrow must be doomsday to thy peace.
The sight of him disarms even death itself.
The starting transport of new quickening life
Gives just such hopes: and pleasure grows again
With looking on him—Let me look my last—
But is a look enough for parting love!
Sure I may take a kiss—Where am I going!
Help, help me, Villeroy! Mountains and seas
Divide your love, never to meet my shame!
[*Throws herself upon the floor; after a short pause, she raises herself upon her elbow.*
What will this battle of the brain do with me!
This little ball, this ravaged province, long
Cannot maintain——The globe of earth wants room
And food for such a war—I find I am going—
Famine, plagues, and flames,
Wide waste and desolation, do your work
Upon the world, and then devour yourselves!
The scene shifts fast—[*She rises*]—and now 'tis better with me;
Conflicting passions have at last unhinged
The great machine! the soul itself seems changed!
Oh, 'tis a happy revolution here!
The reasoning faculties are all deposed;
Judgment, and understanding, common-sense,
Driven out as traitors to the public peace.
Now I am revenged upon my memory!
Her seat dug up, where all the images
Of a long mis-spent life were rising still,
To glare a sad reflection of my crimes,
And stab a conscience through them! You are safe,
You monitors of mischief! What a change!
Better and better still! This is the infant state
Of innocence, before the birth of care.
My thoughts are smooth as the Elysian plains,
Without a rub: the drowsy falling streams
Invite me to their slumbers.
Would I were landed there——
[*Sinks into a chair.*
What noise was that? A knocking at the gate!
It may be Villeroy——No matter who.

Bir. Come, Isabella, come.——

Isa. Hark! I am called!

Bir. You stay too long from me.

Isa. A man's voice! in my bed! How came he there?
Nothing but villany in this bad world! [*Rises.*
Coveting neighbours' goods, or neighbours' wives:
Here's physic for your fever.
[*Draws a dagger, and goes backward to the couch.*
Breathing a vein is the old remedy.
If husbands go to heaven,
Where do they go that send them?—This to try——
[*Just going to stab him, he rises; she knows him, and shrieks.*]
What do I see!

Bir. Isabella, armed!

Isa. Against my husband's life!
Who, but the wretch, most reprobate to grace,
Despair e'er hardened for damnation,
Could think of such a deed—Murder my husband!

Bir. Thou didst not think it.

Isa. Madness has brought me to the gates of hell,
And there has left me. Oh, the frightful change
Of my distractions! Or is this interval
Of reason but to aggravate my woes,
To drive the horror back with greater force
Upon my soul, and fix me mad for ever?

Bir. Why dost thou fly me so?

Isa. I cannot bear his sight; distraction, come,
Possess me all, and take me to thyself!
Shake off thy chains, and hasten to my aid;
Thou art my only cure——Like other friends,
He will not come to my necessities;
Then I must go to find the tyrant out—
Which is the nearest way? [*Running out.*

Bir. Poor Isabella! she's not in a condition
To gave me any comfort, if she could:
Lost to herself——as quickly I shall be
To all the world——Horrors come fast around me;

My mind is overcast—the gathering clouds
Darken the prospect—I approach the brink,
And soon must leap the precipice! Oh, Heaven!
While yet my senses are my own; thus kneeling,
Let me implore thy mercies on my wife:
Release her from her pangs; and if my reason,
O'erwhelmed with miseries, sink before the tempest,
Pardon those crimes despair may bring upon me!
[*Rises.*

Enter NURSE.

Nurse. Sir, there is somebody at the door must needs speak with you; he will not tell his name.

Bir. I come to him. [*Exit Nurse.*
'Tis Belford, I suppose; he little knows
Of what has happened here; I wanted him,
Must employ his friendship, and then—— [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The street.*

Enter CARLOS *with three Ruffians.*

Car. A younger brother! I was one too long,
Not to prevent my being so again.
We must be sudden. Younger brothers are
But lawful bastards of another name,
Thrust out of their nobility of birth
And family, and tainted into trades.
Shall I be one of them—Bow, and retire,
To make more room for the unwieldy heir
To play the fool in? No——
But how shall I prevent it?—Biron comes
To take possession of my father's love—
Would that were all! there's a birth-right too
That he will seize. Besides, if Biron lives,
He will unfold some practices, which I
Cannot well answer—therefore he shall die;
This night must be disposed of: I have means
That will not fail my purpose.—Here he comes.

Enter BIRON.

Bir. Ha! am I beset! I live but to revenge me.
[*They surround him, fighting; Villeroy enters with two servants; they rescue him; Carlos and his party fly.*

Vil. How are you, sir? Mortally hurt, I fear.
Take care, and lead him in.

Bir. I thank you for this goodness, sir; though 'tis
Bestowed upon a very wretch; and death,
Though from a villain's hand, had been to me
An act of kindness, and the height of mercy—
But I thank you, sir. [*He is led in.*

SCENE IV.—*The inside of the house.*

Enter ISABELLA.

Isa. Murder my husband! Oh! I must not dare
To think of living on; my desperate hand
In a mad rage may offer it again.
Stab me any where but there. Here's room enough
In my own breast, to act the fury in,
The proper scene of mischief. Villeroy comes;
Villeroy and Biron come! Oh! hide me from them—
They rack, they tear; let them carve out my limbs,
Divide my body to their equal claims!
My soul is only Biron's; that is free,
And thus I strike for him and liberty.
[*Going to stab herself, Villeroy runs in and prevents her, by taking the dagger from her.*

Vil. Angels defend and save thee!
Attempt thy precious life! the treasury
Of nature's sweets! life of my little world!
Lay violent hands upon thy innocent self!

Isa. Swear I am innocent, and I'll believe you.
What would you have with me? Pray let me go.
Are you there, sir! You are the very man
Have done all this—You would have made
Me believe you married me; but the fool
Was wiser, I thank you: 'tis not all gospel
You men preach upon that subject.

Vil. Dost thou not know me, love?

Isa. O yes: very well. [*Staring on him.*
You are the widow's comforter; that marries
Any woman when her husband's out of the way:
But I'll never, never take your word again.

Vil. I am thy loving husband.

Isa. I have none; no husband—— [*Weeping.*
Never had but one, and he died at Candy!
Did he not? I am sure you told me so; you,
Or somebody, with just such a lying look,
As you have now. Speak, did he not die there?

Vil. He did, my life.

Isa. But swear it, quickly swear,

BIRON *enters bloody, and leaning upon his sword.*

Before that screaming evidence appears,
In bloody proof against me——
[*She, seeing Biron, swoons in a chair; Villeroy helps her.*

Vil. Help there! Nurse, where are you?
Ha! I am distracted too!
[*Going to call for help, sees Biron.*
Biron alive!

Bir. The only wretch on earth that must not live.

Vil. Biron or Villeroy must not, that's decreed.

Bir You saved me from the hands of murderers:
Would you had not, for life's my greatest plague!
And then, of all the world, you are the man
I would not be obliged to—Isabella!
I came to fall before thee: I had died
Happy not to have found your Villeroy here

A long farewell, and a last parting kiss.
[*Kisses her.*
Vil. A kiss! Confusion! It must be your last.
[*Draws.*
Bir. I know it must—Here I give up that death
You but delayed: since what is past has been
The work of fate, thus we must finish it.
Thrust home, be sure. [*Faints.*
Vil. Alas! he faints: some help there!
Bir. 'Tis all in vain, my sorrows soon will end.
Oh, Villeroy! let a dying wretch entreat you
To take this letter to my father. My Isabella!
Couldst thou but hear me, my last words should bless thee.
I cannot, though in death, bequeath her to thee.
[*To Villeroy.*
But I could hope my boy, my little one,
Might find a father in thee—Oh, I faint—
I can no more—Hear me, Heaven! Oh! support
My wife, my Isabella—Bless my child!
And take a poor unhappy— [*Dies.*
Vil. He's gone—Let what will be the consequence,
I'll give it him. I have involved myself,
And would be cleared; that must be thought on now.
My care of her is lost in wild amaze.
[*Going to Isabella.*
Are you all dead within there? Where, where are you? [*Exit.*

ISABELLA *comes to herself.*

Isa. Where have I been? Methinks I stand upon
The brink of life, ready to shoot the gulph,
That lies between me and the realms of rest;
But still, detained, I cannot pass the strait;
Denied to live, and yet I must not die;
Doomed to come back, like a complaining ghost,
To my unburied body—here it lies—
[*Throws herself by Biron's body.*
My body, soul, and life. A little dust,
To cover our cold limbs in the dark grave—
There, there we shall sleep safe and sound together.

Enter VILLEROY, *with servants.*
Vil. Poor wretch! upon the ground! She's not herself:
Remove her from the body.
[*Servants going to raise her.*
Isa. Never, never———
You have divorced us once, but shall no more—
Help, help me, Biron! Ha! bloody and dead!
Oh, murder! murder! you have done this deed;
Vengeance and murder! bury us together—
Do any thing but part us.
Vil. Gently, gently raise her.
She must be forced away.
[*She drags the body after her; they get her into their arms, and carry her off.*
Isa. Oh, they tear me! Cut off my hands—
Let me leave something with him—
They'll clasp him fast—
Oh, cruel, cruel men!
This you must answer one day.
Vil. Good nurse, take care of her.
[*Nurse follows her.*
Send for all helps: all, all that I am worth,
Shall cheaply buy her peace of mind again.
Be sure you do, [*To a Servant.*
Just as I ordered you. The storm grows louder.
[*Knocking at the door.*
I am prepared for it. Now let them in.

Enter COUNT BALDWIN, CARLOS, BELFORD, *Friends, with Servants.*

C. Bald. Oh, do I live to this unhappy day!
Where is my wretched son?
Car. Where is my brother?
[*They see him, and gather about the body.*
Vil. I hope in heaven.
Car. Canst thou pity!
Wish him in Heaven, when thou hast done a deed,
That must forever cut thee from the hopes
Of ever coming there?
Vil. I do not blame you——
You have a brother's right to be concerned
For his untimely death.
Car. Untimely death, indeed!
Vil. But yet you must not say, I was the cause.
Car. Not you the cause! Why, who should murder him?
We do not ask you to accuse yourself;
But I must say that you have murdered him;
And will say nothing else, till justice draws
Upon our side, at the loud call of blood,
To execute so foul a murderer.
Bel. Poor Biron! Is this thy welcome home!
Fr. Rise, sir; there is a comfort in revenge,
Which is left you. [*To C. Bald.*
Car. Take the body hence. [*Biron carried off.*
C. Bald. What could provoke you?
Vil. Nothing could provoke me
To a base murder, which, I find, you think
Me guilty of. I know my innocence;
My servants too can witness that I drew
My sword in his defence, to rescue him.
Bel. Let thy servants be called.
Fr. Let us hear what they can say.
Car. What they can say! Why, what should servants say?
They're his accomplices, his instruments,
And will not charge themselves. If they could do
A murder for his service, they can lie,
Lie nimbly, and swear hard to bring him off.
You say you drew your sword in his defence:
Who were his enemies? Did he need defence?
Had he wronged any one? Could he have cause
To apprehend a danger, but from you?

And yet you rescued him! No, no, he came
Unseasonably (that was all his crime),
Unluckily to interrupt your sport:
You were new married—married to his wife;
And therefore you, and she, and all of you,
(For all of you I must believe concerned)
Combined to murder him out of the way.

Bel. If it is so——

Car. It can be only so.

Fr. Indeed it has a face——

Car. As black as hell.

C. Bald. The law will do me justice: send for the magistrate.

Car. I'll go myself for him—— [*Exit.*

Vil. These strong presumptions, I must own, indeed,
Are violent against me; but I have
A witness, and on this side heaven too.
——Open that door.

[*Door opens, and Pedro is brought forward by Villeroy's servants.*

Here's one can tell you all.

Ped. All, all; save me but from the rack, I'll confess all.

Vil. You and your accomplices designed
To murder Biron?——Speak.

Ped. We did.

Vil. Did you engage upon your private wrongs,
Or were employed?

Ped. He never did us wrong.

Vil. You were set on, then?

Ped. We were set on.

Vil. What do you know of me?

Ped. Nothing, nothing:
You saved his life, and have discovered me.

Vil. He has acquitted me.
If you would be resolved of any thing,
He stands upon his answer.

Bel. Who set you on to act this horrid deed?

C. Bald. I'll know the villain; give me quick his name,
Or I will tear it from thy bleeding heart!

Ped. I will confess.

C. Bald. Do then.

Ped. It was my master, Carlos, your own son.

C. Bald. Oh, monstrous! monstrous! most unnatural!

Bel. Did he employ you to murder his own brother?

Ped. He did; and he was with us when 'twas done.

C. Bald. If this be true, this horrid, horrid tale,
It is but just upon me: Biron's wrongs
Must be revenged: and I the cause of all!

Fr. What will you do with him?

C. Bald. Take him apart——
I know too much. [*Pedro goes in.*

Vil. I had forgot—Your wretched, dying son
Gave me this letter for you.

[*Gives it to Baldwin.*

I dare deliver it. It speaks of me,
I pray to have it read.

C. Bald. You know the hand.

Bel. I know 'tis Biron's hand.

C. Bald. Pray, read it.

[*Belford reads the letter.*

'SIR,

'I find I am come only to lay my death at your door. I am now going out of the world; but cannot forgive you, nor my brother Carlos, for not hindering my poor wife Isabella from marrying with Villeroy; when you knew, from so many letters, that I was alive.

BIRON.'

Vil. How!—Did you know it, then?

C. Bald. Amazement all!

Enter CARLOS, *with Officers.*

Oh, Carlos! are you come? Your brother here,
Here, in a wretched letter, lays his death
To you and me—Have you done any thing
To hasten his sad end?

Car. Bless me, sir, I do any thing! Who, I?

C. Bald. He talks of letters that were sent to us.
I never heard of any.—Did you know
He was alive?

Car. Alive! Heaven knows, not I.

C. Bald. Had you no news of him, from a report,
Or letter, never?

Car. Never, never I.

Bel. That's strange, indeed: I know he often writ
To lay before you the conditions [*To C. Bald.*
Of his hard slavery: and more I know,
That he had several answers to his letters.
He said they came from you; you are his brother.

Car. Never from me.

Bel. That will appear.
The letters, I believe, are still about him;
For some of them I saw but yesterday.

C. Bald. What did those answers say?

Bel. I cannot speak to the particulars;
But I remember well, the sum of them
Was much the same, and all agreed,
That there was nothing to be hoped from you:
That 'twas your barbarous resolution
To let him perish there.——

C. Bald. Oh, Carlos! Carlos! hadst thou been a brother——

Car. This is a plot upon me. I never knew
He was in slavery, or was alive,
Or heard of him, before this fatal hour.

Bel. There, sir, I must confront you.
He sent you a letter, to my knowledge, last night;
And you sent him word you would come to him.
I fear you came too soon.

C. Bald. 'Tis all too plain.——
Bring out that wretch before him.

[*Pedro produced.*

Car. Ha! Pedro there!—Then I am caught indeed!

Bel. You start at sight of him;
He has confessed the bloody deed.

Car. Well, then, he has confessed,
And I must answer it.
Bel. Is there no more?
Car. Why!—what would you have more? I know the worst,
And I expect it.
C. Bald. Why hast thou done all this?
Car. Why, that which damns most men has ruined me;
The making of my fortune. Biron stood
Between me and your favour; while he lived,
I had not that; hardly was thought a son,
And not at all a-kin to your estate.
I could not bear a younger brother's lot,
To live depending upon courtesy——
Had you provided for me like a father,
I had been still a brother.
Car. 'Tis too true!
I never loved thee, as I should have done:
It was my sin, and I am punished for it.
Oh! never may distinction rise again
In families; let parents be the same
To all their children; common in their care,
And in their love of them—I am unhappy,
For loving one too well.
Vil. You knew your brother lived; why did you take
Such pains to marry me to Isabella?
Car. I had my reasons for't———
Vil. More than I thought you had.
Car. But one was this——
I knew my brother loved his wife so well,
That if he ever should come home again,
He could not long outlive the loss of her.
Bel. If you relied on that, why did you kill him?
Car. To make all sure. Now, you are answered all.
Where must I go? I am tired of your questions.
C. Bald. I leave the judge to tell thee what thou art;
A father cannot find a name for thee.
But parricide is highest treason, sure,
To sacred nature's law; and must be so,
So sentenced in thy crimes. Take him away—
The violent remedy is found at last,
That drives thee out, thou poison of my blood,
Infected long, and only foul in thee.
[*Carlos led off.*
Grant me, sweet Heaven! the patience to go through
The torment of my cure—Here, here begins
The operation—Alas! she's mad.

Enter ISABELLA *distracted, held by her Women; hair dishevelled; her little Son running in before, being afraid of her.*

Vil. My Isabella! poor unhappy wretch!
What can I say to her?
Isa. Nothing, nothing; 'tis a babbling world—
I'll hear no more on't. When does the court sit?
I'll not be bought——What! to sell innocent blood!
You look like one of the pale judges here;
Minos, or Radamanth, or Æacus—
I have heard of you.
I have a cause to try, an honest one;
Will you not hear it? Then I must appeal
To the bright throne—Call down the heavenly powers
To witness how you use me.
Wom. Help, help, we cannot hold her.
Vil. You but enrage her more.
C. Bald. Pray, give her way; she'll hurt nobody.
Isa. What have you done with him? He was here but now;
I saw him here. Oh, Biron, Biron! where,
Where have they hid thee from me? He is gone——
But here's a little flying cherubim——
Child. Oh, save me, save me!
[*Running to Baldwin.*
Isa. The Mercury of Heaven, with silver wings,
Impt for the flight, to overtake his ghost,
And bring him back again!
Child. I fear she'll kill me.
C. Bald. She will not hurt thee.
[*She flings away.*
Isa. Will nothing do? I did not hope to find
Justice on earth; 'tis not in heaven neither.
Biron has watched his opportunity——
Softly; he steals it from the sleeping gods,
And sends it thus—— [*Stabs herself.*
Now, I laugh at you, defy you all,
You tyrant murderers!
Vil. Call, call for help——Oh, Heaven! this was too much.
C. Bald. Oh, thou most injured innocence! Yet live,
Live but to witness for me to the world,
How much I do repent me of the wrongs,
The unnatural wrongs, which I have heaped on thee,
And have pulled down this judgment on us all!
Vil. Oh, speak, speak but a word of comfort to me!
C. Bald. If the most tender father's care and love
Of thee, and thy poor child, can make amends—
Oh, yet look up and live!
Isa. Where is that little wretch?
[*They raise her.*
I die in peace, to leave him to your care.
I have a wretched mother's legacy,
A dying kiss——pray let me give it him—
My blessing; that, that's all I have to leave thee.
Oh, may thy father's virtues live in thee,
And all his wrongs be buried in my grave!
[*Dies.*
Vil. She's gone, and all my joys of life with her.
Where are your officers of justice now?

Seize, bind me, drag me to the bloody bar!
Accuse, condemn me; let the sentence reach
My hated life——No matter how it comes;
I'll think it just, and thank you as it falls.
Self-murder is denied me; else how soon
Could I be past the pain of my remembrance!
But I must live, grow grey with lingering grief,
To die at last in telling this sad tale.

C. Bald. Poor wretched orphan of most wretched parents!
'Scaping the storm, thou'rt thrown upon a rock,
To perish there. The very rocks would melt,
Soften their nature, sure, to foster thee;
I find it by myself: my flinty heart,
That barren rock, on which thy father starved,
Opens its springs of nourishment to thee.
There's not a vein but shall run milk for thee.
Oh, had I pardoned my poor Biron's fault,
His first, his only fault—this had not been!
To erring youth there's some compassion due;
But while with rigour you their crimes pursue,
What's their misfortune, is a crime for you.
Hence, learn offending children to forgive:
Leave punishment to Heaven—'tis Heaven's prerogative.

THE

ORPHAN OF CHINA.

BY

MURPHY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

TIMURKAN, *emperor of the Tartars.*
OCTAR, *a Tartar general.*
ZAMTI, *a Mandarin.*
ETAN, *educated as his son.*
HAMET, *a youthful captive, son to Zamti.*
MORAT, *a faithful friend of Zamti.*
MIRVAN, *a Chinese in the Tartar's service, secretly a friend of Zamti.*
ORASMING, } *two conspirators.*
ZIMVENTI, }

WOMEN.

MANDANE, *Zamti's wife.*

Messenger, Guards, &c.

Scene,—Pekin, capital of China.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter MANDANE *and* MIRVAN.

Man. No, never; Mirvan, never—still this heart
Must throb with ceaseless woe——All-gracious Heaven!
Will not this palace, drenched in gore; the crown
Of China's kings fixed on the Tartar's brow;
Will not a tract of twenty years in bondage;
Ah! will not these suffice, without a fresh cause
Of bitter anguish in Mandane's breast?—
Mir. Better suppress these unavailing tears,
This fruitless flood of grief.
Man. It will not be———
Even 'midst the horrors of this dismal hour,
When fate has all transferred from lost Cathai
To vile barbarian hands;—in such an hour,
This heart, revolting from the public cause,
Bleeds from a private source; bleeds for the woes
That hang o'er Zamti's house.———
Mir. Alas! Mandane,
Amidst the general wreck, who does not feel
The keen domestic pang?
Man. Yes, all.—We all
Must feel the kindred-touch; daily the cries
Of widows, orphans, father, son, and brother,
In vain are sent to heaven;—the wasteful rage
Of these barbarians—these accursed invaders
Burns with increasing fire;—the thunder still
Rolls o'er our heads, threatening with hideous crash
To fall at once, and bury us in ruin.
Mir. And quickly fall it must!—the hand of heaven
Weighs this great empire down.
Man. Nay, tax not Heaven!

Almighty Justice never bares its arm
'Gainst innocence and truth. 'Tis Timurkan,
That fell barbarian—that insatiate waster——
May curses blast the Tartar!—he—'Tis he
Has bore down all, and still his slaughtering sword,
In yonder field of death, where Corea's troops
Made their last stand for liberty and China,
Crimsons the land with blood. This battle lost,
Oh! then farewell to all!—But, Mirvan, say,
How came the tidings?

Mir. From yon lofty tower,
As my eyes, straining toward the distant plain,
Sent forth an anxious look, through clouds of dust
The savage bands appeared; the western sun
Gleamed on their burnished helms; and soon a shout
From the glad multitude proclaimed the approach
Of Timurkan:—elated with new conquest,
The tyrant comes, and where his wrath will stop
Heav'n only knows!———

Man. Oh! there—there lies the thought
At which imagination starts, appalled
With horror at the scene her busy workings
Have coloured to my sight——there lies the thought
That wakens all a mother's fears—alas!
I tremble for my son!

Mir. Your son—kind Heaven!
Have you not checked his ardour?—with your tears,
Your soft authority, restrained the hero
From the alarms of war?———

Man. Alas, good Mirvan,
Thou little know'st his danger!—but that truth
Must never pass these lips.

Mir. I hope, Mandane
Doubts not my honest zeal—full well you know
I bear this tyrant deep and mortal hate;
That under him I list, and wear this garb,
In hopes that some occasion may arrive,
When I may strike an unexpected blow,
And do my country right.

Man. Thy loyalty,
Thy truth and honour have been ever spotless.
Besides thy wrongs, thy countless wrongs, the wounds
He gave your injured family and name———

Mir. Alas! those wounds must still lie bleeding here,
Untented by the hand of time—Not all
His lenient arts, his favours heaped upon me,
Shall cool the burning anguish of my soul.
What! he that slew my father!—dragged my sister,
Blooming in years, to his detested bed!—
Yes, tyrant, yes:—thy unextinguished foe
Dwells in this bosom. Surely, then, to me
Mandane may reveal her griefs—her wrongs
Will add new fuel to my hidden fires,
And make them burn more fiercely.

Man. Urge no more—
My woes must rest concealed. Yet should the tyrant
Learn from the captives of yon vanquished host,
That China's orphan breathes the vital air,
And, to himself unknown, within his breast
Unconscious bears the generous glowing flame
Of all the virtues of his royal line;
Oh! should they know that the dear youth survives,
That for his righteous cause this war began,
Their fury then would kindle to a blaze,
Might wrap the world in flames, and in the ruin
My blameless son must perish!

Mir. Seek not thus
To multiply the ills that hover round you;
Nor from the stores of busy fancy add
New shafts to fortune's quiver. Zamti's care
Hath still deceived suspicion's wakeful eye;
And o'er the Mandarin his manners pure,
And sacred function, have diffused an air
Of venerable awe, which e'en can teach
These northern foes to soften into men.

Man. Yes, Mirvan, yes—Religion wears a mien
In Zamti's person so severely mild,
That the fierce Scythian rests upon his spear,
And wonders what he feels! Such is the charm
Of heart-felt virtue; such is nature's force
That speaks abroad, and in rude northern hearts
Can stamp the image of an awful God.
From that source springs some hope:—Wretch that I am!
Hope idly flutters on my trembling tongue,
While melancholy, brooding o'er her wrongs,
Lays waste the mind with horror and despair.
—What noise is that?——

Mir. Compose this storm of grief;
In every sound your fancy hears the Tartar——
Your husband this way bends——

Man. Celestial Powers!
What labouring sighs heave in his breast?—what terror
Rolls in the patriot's eye?—haste, Mirvan, hence;
Again look out; gather the flying news,
And let me know each circumstance of ruin.

[*Exit Mirvan.*

Enter ZAMTI.

Man. Zamti!

Zamti. Mandane!

Man. Ah! what hast thou seen?
What hast thou heard?—Tell me—has fate decreed
The doom of China?

Zamti. China is no more!———
The eastern world is lost—this mighty empire
Falls with the universe beneath the stroke
Of savage force—falls from it's towering hopes;
For ever, ever fallen!

Man. Yet, why, ye Powers!

Why should a tyrant, trained to lust and murder,
A lawless ravager from savage wilds,
Where cheerful day ne'er dawns, but lowering heaven
For ever rolls a turbulence of clouds;
Why should a monster thus usurp the world,
And trample fair simplicity from ill
Beneath his ruffian feet?———

Zamti. Far hence, Mandane,
Those happy days, alas! are fled, when peace
Here nursed her blooming olives, and shed round
Her fostering influence.—In vain the plan
Of sacred laws, by hoary elders taught,
Laws founded on the base of public weal,
Gave lessons to the world. In vain Confucius
Unlocked his radiant stores of moral truth;
In vain bright science, and each tender muse,
Beamed every elegance on polished life——
Barbarian power prevails. Whate'er our sages taught,
Or genius could inspire, must fade away,
And each fair virtue wither at the blast
Of northern domination.

Man. Fatal day!
More fatal e'en than that, which first beheld
This race accursed wishin these palace walls.
Since hope, that balm of wretched minds, is now
Irrevocably lost.

Zamti. Name not the day,
Which saw this city sacked—fresh stream my eyes,
Fresh bleeds my heart, whene'er the sad idea
Comes o'er my tortured mind. Why, cruel Powers!
Why in that moment could not Zamti fall?

Man. Thy sanctity, the symbol of thy God,
Made even the conqueror suspend his blow,
And murmur soft humanity. High Heaven
Protected thee for its own great designs;
To save the royal child, the new-born babe,
From the dire slaughter of his ancient line.

Zamti. Yes, my Mandane, in that hour of carnage,
For purposes yet in the womb of time,
I was reserved. I was ordained to save
The infant boy; the dear, the precious charge,
The last of all my kings:—full twenty years
I've hid him from the world, and from himself;
And now I swear——Kneel we together here;
While in this dreadful pause our souls renew
Their solemn purpose.——— [*Both kneel.*
Thou all-gracious Being,
Whose tutelary care hath watched the fate
Of China's Orphan, who hast taught his steps
The paths of safety, still envelop him
In sevenfold night, till your own hour is come;
Till your slow justice see the dread occasion
To rouse his soul, and bid him walk abroad,
Vicegerent of your power;—and if thy servant,
Or this his soft associate, e'er defeat
By any word or deed the great design,
Then straight may all your horrible displeasure
Be launched upon us from your red right arm,
And in one ruin dash us both together,
The blasted monuments of wrath!

Man. That here
Mandane vows ne'er to betray his cause,
Be it enrolled in the records of Heaven!
[*Both rise.*

Zamti. And now my heart more lightly beats; methinks,
With strength redoubled I can meet the shock
Of adverse fate.

Man. And lo! the trial comes——
For see where Etan mourns——See where the youth,
Unknowing of the storm that gathers o'er him,
Brings some new tale of woe.——

Enter ETAN.

Etan. My honoured father,
And you, my helpless mother,—ah! where now,
Illustrious wretched pair, where will ye fly?
Where will your miseries now find a shelter?

Zamti. In virtue—I and this dear faithful woman—
We ask no more.

Man. Ah! quickly, Etan, say
What means that pallid look? What new event
Brings on the work of fate?

Zamti. Say, does the tyrant
Return, unglutted yet with blood?

Etan. He does.
Even now his triumph moves within the gates,
In dread barbaric pomp:—the iron swarms
Of Hyperboreans troop along the streets,
Reeking from slaughter; while from gazing crowds
Of their dire countrymen, an uproar wild
Of joy ferocious through the astonished air
Howls like a northern tempest:—O'er the rest,
Proud in superior eminence of guilt,
The tyrant rides sublime. Behind his car
The refuse of his sword, a captive train
Display their honest scars, and gnash their teeth
With rage and desperation.——

Man. Cruel fate!

Etan. With these a youth, distinguished from the rest,
Proceeds in sullen march. Heroic fire
Glows in his cheek, and from his ardent eye
Beams amiable horror.

Man. What of this youth?

Zamti. Be not alarmed, Mandane—What of him?

Etan. On him all eyes were fixed with eager gaze,
As if their spirits, struggling to come forth,
Would strain each visual nerve—while through the crowd
A busy murmur ran—'If fame say right,
'Beneath that habit lurks a prince; the last
'Of China's race.' The rumour spreads abroad
From man to man; and all with loud acclaim
Denounce their vengeance on him.

Man. Ha! what say'st thou, Etan?
Heavens, how each blackening hour, in deeper horror,
Comes charged with woe!
Zamti. It cannot be. Ye vain,
Ye groundless terrors, hence! [*Aside.*
Man. My honoured lord,
Those eyes upturned to Heaven, alas! in vain,
Declare your inward conflict.
Zamti. Loved Mandane,
I prithee leave me—but a moment leave me.
Heed not the workings of a sickly fancy,
Wrought on by every popular report.
Thou know'st, with Morat, I conveyed the infant
Far as the eastern point of Corea's realm;
There, where no human trace is seen, no sound
Assails the ear, save when the foaming surge
Breaks on the shelving beach, that there the youth
Might mock their busy search. Then check thy fears—
Retire, my love, awhile; I'll come anon—
And fortify thy soul with firm resolve,
Becoming Zamti's wife.
Man. Yes, Zamti's wife
Shall never act unworthy of her lord!
Then hence I'll go, and satisfy each doubt
This youthful captive raises in my heart,
Quick panting with its fears. And O ye powers!
Protect my son, my husband, and my king!
[*Exit Mandane.*
Zamti. Come hither, Etan—thou perceiv'st the toils
That now encircle me.
Etan. Alas! too well
I see the impending storm. But surely, sir,
Should this young captive prove the royal orphan,
You'll never own the important truth.
Zamti. Dream not, young man,
To stand secure, yet blooming into life,
While vengeance hovers o'er your father's head.
The stock once fallen, each scyon must decay.
Etan. Then let me perish!—Witness for me, Heaven,
Could Etan's fall appease the tyrant's wrath,
A willing victim he would yield his life,
And ask no greater boon of Heaven.
Zamti. This zeal,
So fervid in a stranger's cause———
Etan. A stranger!—he!—
My king a stranger!—Sir, you never meant it—
Perhaps you would explore the fiery seeds
Of Etan's temper, ever prompt to blaze
At honour's sacred name. Perish the man,
Who, when his country calls him to defend
The rights of human kind, or bravely die,
Who, then, to glory dead, can shrink aghast,
And hold a council with his abject fears!
Zamti. These towerings of the soul, alas! are vain.
I know the Tartar well—should I attempt
By any virtuous fraud to veil the truth,
His lion-rage again shall stalk abroad,
Again shall quaff the blood of innocence;
And, for Zaphimri, all the poor remains
Of China's matrons, and her hoary sires,
Her blooming virgins, and her lisping babes,
Shall yield their throats to the fell murderer's knife,
And all be lost for ever!
Etan. Then at once
Proclaim him to the world; each honest hand
Will grasp a sword, and, 'midst the circling guards,
Reach the usurper's heart—or, should they fail,
Should overwhelming bands obstruct the deed,
They'll greatly dare to die!—better to die
With falling liberty, than basely lead
An ignominious life. Zaphimri lost,
Ne'er shall fair order dawn; but through the land
Slavery shall clank her chains, and violation,
Rapine, and murder, riot at the will
Of lust and lawless power.
Zamti. Thou brave young man,
Indulge my fond embrace—thy lovely ardour
It glads me thus to see!—To ease at once
Thy generous fears—the prince Zaphimri's safe;
Safe in my guardian care.
Etan. The prisoner, sir,
He does not then alarm you?
Zamti. No! from thence
I've nought to fear.
Etan. Oh! sir, inform your son
Where is the royal heir?
Zamti. Seek not too soon
To know that truth—now I'll disclose the work,
The work of vengeance, which my labouring soul
Has long been fashioning. Even at this hour
Stupendous ruin hovers o'er the heads
Of this accursed race.
Etan. Ruin!
Zamti. I'll tell thee———
When Timurkan led forth his savage bands,
Unpeopling this great city, I then seized
The hour, to tamper with a chosen few,
Who have resolved, when the barbarians lie
Buried in sleep and wine, and hotly dream
Their havock o'er again—then, then, my son,
In one collected blow to burst upon them;
Like their own northern clouds, whose midnight horror
Impending o'er the world, at length breaks forth
In the vaunt lightning's blaze, in storms and thunder
Through all the reddening air, till frighted nature
Start from her couch, and waken to a scene
Of uproar and destruction.
Etan. Oh! my father,
The glorious enterprize!
Zamti. Mark me, young man.
Seek thou my friends, Orasming and Zimventi:
In the dim holy cloisters of yon temple

Thou wilt find them musing. Near Osmingti's tomb
I charged them all convene, and there do thou
Await my coming—bid them ne'er remit
Their high heroic ardour; let them know,
Whate'er shall fall on this old mouldering clay,
The tyrant never shall subdue my mind.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter ZAMTI.

Zamti. DREAM on, deluded tyrant! yes, dream on
In blind security! whene'er high Heaven
Means to destroy, it curses with illusion,
With error of the mind. Yes, wreak thy fury
Upon this captive youth; whoe'er he is,
If from his death this groaning empire rise,
Once more itself, resplendent, rich in arts
That humanize the world, he pays a debt
Due to his king, his country, and his God.
His father, wheresoe'er he dwell, in tears
Shall tell the glory on his boy derived;
And even his mother, amidst her matron shrieks,
Shall bless the child-bed pang that brought him forth
To this great lot, by fate to few allowed!
What wouldst thou, Mirvan?

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Eagerly without
A reverend stranger craves access to Zamti:
His head hoary with age, with galling tears
His eyes suffused; his every look impatience—
Zamti. Give him admittance. [*Exit Mirvan.*
How my spirits rush
Tumultuous to my heart—what may this mean?
Lo! where he comes——

Enter MORAT.

Morat. Zamti!——
Zamti. Ha! through the veil
Of age, that face—that mien—Morat!
Morat. Oh! Zamti!
Let me once more embrace thee——
Zamti. Good old man! [*They embrace.*
But wherefore art thou here? what of my boy?
Morat. Ah! what indeed? Even from the ocean's margin,
Parched with the sun, or chilled with midnight damps,
O'er hills, and rocks, and dreary continents,
In vain I have followed——
Zamti. Why didst let him forth?
Morat. Think not; thy Morat urged him to the deed.
His valour was the cause; and soon as fame
Proclaimed the prince alive, the mighty din
Of preparation through all Corea's realm
Alarmed his breast—indignant of controul,
He burst his covert, and now, hapless youth—
Zamti. Ah! dead! in battle fallen!
Morat. Alas! even now
He drags the conqueror's chain.
Zamti. Mandane then
May still embrace her son! My boy may live,
To know the sweets of freedom ere he die.
Morat. Alas! the measure of your woes is full!
Unconscious of our frauds, the tyrant thinks
The prince his prisoner in your son.
Zamti. Ah! Morat!
Morat. Wild through the streets the foe calls out on Zamti.
Thee they pronounce the author of this fraud;
And on your Hamet threaten instant vengeance.
Zamti. There was but this—but this, ye cruel powers,
And this you have heaped upon me! Was it not
Enough to tear him from his mother's arms—
Doomed for his prince to wander o'er the world!
Alas! what needed more? Fond foolish eyes,
Stop your unbidden gush——tear, tear me piecemeal——
No! I will not complain—but whence on him
Could that suspicion glance?
Morat. This very morn,
Ere yet the battle joined, a faithful messenger,
Who through the friendly gloom of night had held
His darkling way, and passed the Tartar's camp,
Brought me advices from the Corean chief,
That soon as Hamet joined the warlike train,
His story he related. Straight the gallant leader
With open arms received him—knew him for thy son,
In secret knew him, nor revealed he aught
That touched his birth. But still the busy voice
Of fame, increasing as she goes, through all the ranks
Babbled abroad each circumstance. By thee
How he was privately conveyed—sent forth
A tender infant to be reared in solitude,
A stranger to himself! The warriors saw
With what a graceful port he moved in arms,
An early hero! deemed him far above
The common lot of life—deemed him Zaphimri,
And all with reverential awe beheld him.
This, this, my Zamti, reached the tyrant's ear,
And rises into horrid proof.
Zamti. If so,
Oh! what a sacrifice must now be made! [*Aside.*
Morat. But when the secret shall be known—
Zamti. Oh! Morat!
Does thy poor bleeding country still remain

Dear to thy heart? Say, dost thou still revere
That holy power above, Supreme of beings,
Mistaken by the Bonzee, whom our fathers
Worshipped in happier days?
Morat. He—only he
For twenty years hath given me strength in exile.
Zamti. Then bending here, before his awful throne,
Swear, what I now unfold shall ever lie
In sacred silence wrapped.
Morat. I swear!
Zamti. Now mark me——
Morat—my son—[*Turning aside.*]—Oh! cruel, cruel task,
To conquer nature while the heart-strings break!
Morat. Why heave those sighs? and why that burst of grief?
Zamti. My son—his guiltless blood—I cannot speak! [*Bursts into tears.*
Morat. Ha! Wilt thou shed his blood?
Zamti. Thou wretched father!——
[*Half aside.*
Morat. Oh! had you known the virtues of the youth,
His truth, his courage, his enlightened mind—
Zamti. I prithee urge no more—here nature's voice
Speaks in such pleadings: such reproaches, Morat,
—Here in my very heart—give woundings here,
Thou canst not know, and only parents feel!
Morat. And wilt thou, cruel in thy tears——
Zamti. Nay, cease,
In pity to a father, cease—Think, Morat—
Think of Zaphimri!
Morat. Ah! how fares the prince?
Zamti. He fares, my Morat, like a god on earth,
Unknowing his celestial origin,
Yet quick, intense, and bursting into action;
His great heart labouring with—he knows not what—
Prodigious deeds! Deeds, which ere long shall rouse,
Astonish, and alarm the world.
Morat. What mean
Those mystic sounds?
Zamti. Revenge, conquest, and freedom!
Morat. Conquest and freedom!
Zamti. Ay! conquest and freedom!
The midnight hour shall call a chosen band
Of hidden patriots forth; who, when the foe
Sinks down in drunken revelry, shall pour
The gathered rage of twenty years upon him,
And vindicate the eastern world.
Morat. By Heaven!
The news revives my soul.
Zamti. And canst thou think,
To save one vulgar life, that Zamti now
Will mar the vast design? No; let him bleed,
Let my boy bleed! in such a cause as this,
I can resign my son—with tears of joy
Resign him! and one complicated pang
Shall wrench him from my heart.——
The conqueror comes! [*Warlike music within.*
This is no hour for parleying—Morat, hence!
And leave me to my fixed resolve.
Morat. Yet think,
Think of some means to save your Hamet,
Zamti. Oh!
It cannot be—the soul of Timurkan
Is bold and stirring: when occasion calls,
He springs aloft, like an expanding fire,
And marks his way with ruin. Now he knows
Zaphimri lives, his fear will make him daring
Beyond his former crimes—for joy and riot,
Which this day's triumph brings, remorseless rage
And massacre succeed—and all our hopes
Are blasted for an unimportant boy.
[*A second flourish.*
Morat. That nearer sound proclaims his dread approach.
Yet once more, Zamti, think——
Zamti. No more—I will send
Those shall conduct thee where Orasming lives.
There dwell unseen of all. But, Morat, first
Seek my Mandane. Heavens! how shall I bear
Her strong impetuosity of grief,
When she shall know my fatal purpose! Thou
Prepare her tender spirit; soothe her mind,
And save, Oh! save me from that dreadful conflict! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Two large Folding-gates in the back-scene are burst open by the Tartars, and then enter TIMURKAN, *with his train.*

Timur. Hail to this regal dome, this gorgeous palace!
Where this inventive race have lavished all
Their elegance:—ye gay apartments, hail!
Beneath your storied roof, where mimic life
Glows to the eye, and at the painter's touch
A new creation lives along the walls;
Once more receive a conqueror, arrived
From rougher scenes, where stern rebellion dared
Draw forth his phalanx; till this warlike arm
Hurled desolation on his falling ranks,
And now the monster, in yon field of death,
Lies overwhelmed in ruin.
Octar. There he fell,
No more to stalk thy realm: the eastern world,
From this auspicious day, beneath your feet
Lies bound in adamantine chains.
Timur. Thus, Octar,
Shall Timurkan display his conquering banners,
From high Samarcand's walls, to where the Tanais
Devolves his icy tribute to the sea.
Octar. But first this captive prince!——
Timur. Yes, Octar, first
Zaphimri gluts my rage—bring him before us—first
We'll crush the seeds of dark conspiracy;

For Zamti—he, that false insidious slave,
Shall dearly pay his treasons.
Octar. Zamti's crimes
'Twere best to leave unpunished:——versed in wiles
Of sly hypocrisy, he wins the love
Of the deluded multitude. 'Twould seem,
Should we inflict that death his frauds deserve,
As if we meant destruction to their faith:
When a whole people's minds are once inflamed
For their religious rights, their fury burns
With rage more dreadful, as the source is holy.
Timur. Octar, thou reasonest right:—henceforth my art,
To make this stubborn race receive the yoke,
Shall be by yielding to their softer manners,
Their vesture, laws, and customs: thus to blend
And make the whole one undistinguished people.
The boy comes forth in sullen mood——what passions
Swell in his breast in vain!——

Enter HAMET, *in chains.*

Timur. Thou art the youth,
Who mowed our battle down, and fleshed your sword
In many a slaughtered Tartar.
Hamet. True; I am.
Timur. Too well I marked thy rage, and saw thee hew
A wasteful passage through the embattled plain.
Hamet. Then, be thou witness for me, in that hour
I never shunned your thickest war; and if
In yonder field, where my poor countrymen,
In mangled heaps, lie many a rood extended,
Kind fate had doomed me to a noble fall,
With this right arm I earned it.
Timur. Say, what motive
Unsheathed thy rebel blade, and bade thee seek
These wars?
Hamet. The love of honourable deeds,
The groans of bleeding China, and the hate
Of tyrants.
Timur. Ha!—take heed, rash youth—I see
This lesson has been taught thee. Octar, haste,
Seek me the mandarin: let him forthwith
Attend me here. [*Exit Octar.*] Now tremble at my words!
Thy motive to these wars is known—thou art Zaphimri.
Hamet. I Zaphimri!
Timur. False one, yes:
Thou art Zaphimri—thou!—whom treacherous guile
Stole from my rage, and sent to distant wilds,
Till years and horrid counsel should mature thee
For war and wild commotion.
Hamet. I the prince!
The last of China's race! Nay, mock not majesty,
Nor with the borrowed robes of sacred kings
Dress up a wretch like me—Were I Zaphimri,
Think'st thou thy trembling eye could bear the shock
Of a much-injured king? Couldst thou sustain it?
Say, couldst thou bear to view a royal orphan,
Whose father, mother, brother, sisters, all,
Thy murderous arm hath long since laid in dust?
Whose native crown on thy ignoble brow
Thou darest dishonour?——whose wide-wasted country
Thy arms have made a wilderness?
Timur. I see
Thou hast been tutored in thy lone retreat
By some sententious pedant. Soon these vain,
These turgid maxims, shall be all subdued
By thy approaching death.
Hamet. Let death come on;
Guilt, guilt alone shrinks back appalled——the brave
And honest still defy his dart;—the wise
Calmly can eye his frown;—and misery
Invokes his friendly aid to end her woes.
Timur. Thy woes, presumptuous youth, with all my fears,
Shall soon lie buried.

Enter ZAMTI.

Timur. Now, pious false one, say, who is that youth?
Zamti. His air, his features, and his honest mien,
Proclaim all fair within. But, mighty sir,
I know him not.
Timur. Take heed, old man, nor dare,
As thou dost dread my power, to practise guile
Beneath a mask of sacerdotal perfidy:
Priestcraft, I think, calls it a pious fraud.
Zamti. Priestcraft and sacerdotal perfidy
To me are yet unknown. Religion's garb
Here never serves to consecrate a crime:
We have not yet, thank Heaven, so far imbibed
The vices of the north!
Timur. Thou vile impostor!
Avow Zaphimri, whom thy treacherous arts
Concealed from justice; or else desolation
Again shall ravage this devoted land.
Zamti. Alas! full well thou know'st, that arm already
Hath shed all royal blood.
Timur. Traitor, 'tis false!
By thee, vile slave, I have been wrought to think
The hated race destroyed: thy artful tale
Abused my credulous ear. But know, at length,
Some captive slaves, by my command impaled,
Have owned the horrid truth—have owned they fought
To seat Zaphimri on the throne of China.
Hear me, thou froward boy—darest thou be honest,
And answer who thou art?
Hamet. Dare I be honest!
I dare!—a mind, grown up in native honour,
Dares not be otherwise—then, if thy troops

Ask from the lightning of whose blade they fled,
Tell them 'twas Hamet's.
Zamti. 'Tis—it is my son!——
My boy—my Hamet!—— [*Aside.*
Timur. Where was your abode?
Hamet. Far hence remote, in Corea's happy realm,
Where the first beams of day, with orient blushes,
Tinge the salt wave: there, on the sea-beat shore,
A cavern rock yielded a lone retreat
To virtuous Morat.
Zamti. Oh! ill-fated youth! [*Aside.*
Hamet. The pious hermit, in that moss-grown dwelling,
Found an asylum from heart-piercing woes,
From slavery, and that restless din of arms,
With which thy fell ambition shook the world.
There too the sage nurtured my greener years;
With him and contemplation have I walked
The paths of wisdom: what the great Confucius
Of moral beauty taught, whate'er the wise,
Still wooing knowledge in her secret haunts,
Disclosed of Nature to the sons of men,
My wondering mind has heard: but above all,
The hermit taught me the most useful science,
That noble science to be brave and good.
Zamti. Oh! lovely youth! at every word he utters,
A soft effusion, mixed of grief and joy,
Flows o'er my heart. [*Aside.*
Timur. Who, said he, was your father?
Hamet. My birth the pious sage—I know not why——
Still wrapped in silence; and when urged to tell,
He only answered that a time might come,
I should not blush to know my father.
Timur. Now,
With truth declare, hast thou ne'er heard of Zamti?
Hamet. Of Zamti! Oft, enraptured with his name,
My heart has glowed within me, as I heard
The praises of the godlike man.
Timur. Thou slave, [*To Zamti.*
Each circumstance arraigns thy guilt!
Hamet. Oh! Heavens!
Can that be Zamti?
Timur. Yes, that is the traitor.
Hamet. Let me adore his venerable form,
Thus on my knees adore—
Zamti. I cannot look upon him,
Lest tenderness dissolve my feeble powers,
And wrest my purpose from me— [*Aside.*
Timur. Hence, vain boy!
Thou specious traitor! thou false, hoary moralist! [*To Zamti.*
Confusion has o'erta'en thy subtle frauds.
To make my crown's assurance firm, that none
Hereafter shall aspire to wrench it from me,
Now own your fancied king; or, by yon heaven,
To make our vengeance sure, through all the east
Each youth shall die, and carnage thin mankind,
Till in the general wreck your boasted Orphan
Shall undistinguished fall. Thou know'st my word
Is fate. Octar, draw near—when treason lurks,
Each moment's big with danger—thou observe
These my commands——— [*Talks apart to Octar.*
Zamti. Now, virtuous cruelty repress my tears!
Cease your soft conflict, Nature! Hear me, Tartar:
That youth—his air—his every look unmans me quite.
Timur. Wilt thou begin, dissembler?
Zamti. Down, down, down——
It must be so, or all is lost—That youth,
I've dealt by him—as every king could wish
In a like case, his faithful subjects would.
Timur. Dost thou, then, own it? Triumph, Timurkan,
And in Zaphimri's grave lie hushed my fears!
Brave Octar, let the victim straight be led
To yonder sacred fane: there, in the view
Of my rejoicing Tartars, the declining sun
Shall see him offered to our living Lama,
For this day's conquest: thence a golden train
Of radiant years shall mark my future sway.
[*Exit.*
Zamti. Flow, flow my tears, and ease this aching breast!
Hamet. Nay, do not weep for me, thou good old man!
If it will close the wounds of bleeding China,
That a poor wretch, like me, must yield his life,
I give it freely. If I am a king,
Though sure it cannot be, what greater blessing
Can a young prince enjoy, than to diffuse,
By one great act, that happiness on millions,
For which his life should be a round of care?
Come, lead me to my fate.
[*Exit with Octar, &c.*
Zamti. Hold, hold, my heart!
My gallant, generous youth! Mandane's air,
His mother's dear resemblance, rives my soul.
Man. [*Within.*] Oh! let me fly, and find the barbarous man!
Where—where is Zamti?
Zamti. Ha! 'tis Mandane——
Wild as the winds, the mother all alive
In every heart-string, the forlorn one comes
To claim her boy!

Enter MANDANE.

Man. And can it then be true?
Is human nature exiled from thy breast?
Art thou indeed so barbarous?
Zamti. Loved Mandane,
Fix not your scorpions here; a bearded shaft
Already drinks my spirits up.
Man. I've seen
The trusty Morat—Oh! I have heard it all!
He would have shunned my steps; but what can 'scape

The eye of tenderness like mine?
Zamti. By Heaven
I cannot speak to thee!
Man. Think'st thou those tears,
Those false, those cruel tears, will choak the voice
Of a fond mother's love, now stung to madness?
Oh! I will rend the air with lamentations,
Root up this hair, and beat this throbbing breast,
Turn all connubial joys to bitterness,
To fell despair, to anguish and remorse,
Unless my son——
Zamti. Thou ever faithful woman,
Oh! leave me to my woes!
Man. Give me my child,
Thou worse than Tartar! give me back my son!
Oh! give him to a mother's eager arms,
And let me strain him to my heart!
Zamti. Heaven knows
How dear my boy is here! But our first duty
Now claims attention—to our country's love
All other tender fondnesses must yield:
I was a subject ere I was a father.
Man. You were a savage bred in Scythian wilds,
And humanizing pity never reached
Your heart—Was it for this—oh! thou unkind one!
Was it for this—oh! thou inhuman father!
You wooed me to your nuptial bed? So long
Have I then clasped thee in these circling arms,
And made this breast your pillow? Cruel, say,
Are these your vows? are these your fond endearments?
Nay, look upon me—if this wasted form,
These faded eyes have turned your heart against me,
With grief for you I withered in my bloom.
Zamti. Why wilt thou pierce my heart?
Man. Alas! my son,
Have I then bore thee in these matron arms,
To see thee bleed? Thus dost thou then return?
This could your mother hope, when first she sent
Her infant exile to a distant clime?
Ah! could I think thy early love of fame
Would urge thee to this peril? thus to fall,
By a stern father's will—by thee to die!
From thee, inhuman, to receive his doom:
Murdered by thee! Yet hear me, Zamti, hear me—
Thus, on my knees—I threaten now no more—
'Tis Nature's voice that pleads—Nature alarmed,
Quick, trembling, wild, touched to her inmost feeling,
When force would tear her tender young ones from her.
Zamti. Nay, seek not, with enfeebling fond ideas,
To swell the flood of grief—it is in vain—
He must submit to fate!
Man. Barbarian! no—— [*She rises hastily*
He shall not die—rather—I prithee, Zamti,
Urge not a grief-distracted woman: tremble
At the wild fury of a mother's love!
Zamti. I tremble rather at a breach of oaths.
But thou! break thine—bathe your perfidious hands
In this life-blood—betray the righteous cause
Of all our sacred kings.
Man. Our kings! our kings!
What are the sceptered rulers of the world?
Formed of one common clay, are they not all
Doomed with each subject, with the meanest slave,
To drink the cup of human woe? alike
All levelled by affliction? Sacred kings!
'Tis human policy sets up their claim—
Mine is a mother's cause—mine is the cause
Of husband, wife, and child: those tend'rest ties!
Superior to your right divine of kings!——
Zamti. Then go, Mandane—thou once faithful woman,
Dear to this heart in vain: go, and forget
Those virtuous lessons, which I oft have taught thee,
In fond credulity, while on each word
You hung enamoured. Go, to Timurkan
Reveal the awful truth. Be thou spectatress
Of murdered majesty. Embrace your son,
And let him lead, in shame and servitude,
A life ignobly bought. Then let those eyes,
Those faded eyes, which grief for me hath dimmed,
With guilty joy re-animate their lustre,
To brighten slavery, and beam their fires
On the fell Scythian murderer.
Man. And is it thus,
Thus is Mandane known? My soul disdains
The vile imputed guilt. No—never—never—
Still I am true to fame. Come, lead me hence,
Where I may lay down life to save Zaphimri,
But save my Hamet too. Then, then you'll find
A heart beats here, as warm and great as thine.
Zamti. Then make with me one strong, one glorious effort,
And rank with those, who, from the first of time,
In Fame's eternal archives stand revered,
For conquering all the dearest ties of Nature,
To serve the general weal.
Man. That savage virtue
Loses with me its horrid charms. I have sworn
To save my king. But should a mother turn
A dire assassin? oh! I cannot bear
The piercing thought! Distraction, quick distraction
Will seize my brain. Think thou behold'st my Hamet,
The dear, the lovely youth, my blooming hero!
Think thou behold'st him—See! my child! my child!
By guards surrounded, a devoted victim!
Barbarian, hold—ah! see, he dies! he dies!
[*She faints into Zamti's arms.*

Zamti. Where is Arsace? Fond maternal love
Shakes her weak frame.

Enter ARSACE.

Quickly, Arsace, help
This ever-tender creature. Wandering life
Rekindles in her cheek. Soft, lead her off
To where the fanning breeze, in yonder bower,
May woo her spirits back—Propitious Heaven!
Pity the woundings of a father's heart!
Pity my strugglings with this best of women!
Support our virtue! kindle in our souls
A ray of your divine enthusiasm;
Such as inflames the patriot's breast, and lifts
The impassioned mind to that sublime of virtue,
That even on the rack it feels the good,
Which, in a single hour, it works for millions,
And leaves the legacy to after times!

[*Exit, leading off Mandane.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Temple. Several tombs up and down the stage.*

Enter MORAT.

Morat. This is the place—these the long winding aisles,
The solemn arches, whose religious awe
Attunes the mind to melancholy musing,
Such as befits free men reduced to slaves.
Here Zamti meets his friends. Amid these tombs,
Where lie the sacred manes of our kings,
They pour their orisons——hold converse here
With the illustrious shades of murdered heroes,
And meditate a great revenge——(*a groan is heard*) A groan!
The burst of anguish from some care-worn wretch,
That sorrows o'er his country—ha! 'tis Zamti!

ZAMTI *comes out of a tomb.*

Zamti. Who's he, that seeks these mansions of the dead?
Morat. The friend of Zamti and of China.
Zamti. Morat!
Come to my arms, thou good, thou best of men;
I have been weeping o'er the sacred reliques
Of a dear murdered king—Where are our friends?
Hast seen Orasming?
Morat. Through these vaults of death
Lonely he wanders, plunged in deep despair.
Zamti. Hast thou not told him? hast thou nought revealed
Touching Zaphimri?
Morat. There will I wait thy will——
Zamti. Oh! thou art ever faithful! on thy lips
Sits pensive Silence, with her hallowed finger,
Guarding the pure recesses of thy mind,
But, lo! they come.

Enter ORASMING, ZIMVENTI, *and others.*

Zamti. Droop ye, my gallant friends?
Oras. Oh! Zamti, all is lost! Our dreams of liberty
Are vanished into air. Nought now avails
Integrity of life. E'en Heaven, combined
With lawless might, abandons us and virtue.
Zamti. Can your great souls thus shrink within ye? thus
From heroes will ye dwindle into slaves?
Oras. Oh! could you give us back Zaphimri! then
Danger would smile, and lose it's face of horror.
Zamti. What! would his presence fire ye?
Oras. 'Twould, by Heaven!
Zim. This night should free us from the Tartar's yoke.
Zamti. Then mark the care of the all-gracious gods!
This youthful captive, whom in chains they hold,
Is not Zaphimri.
Oras. } Not Zaphimri!
Zim. }
Zamti. No!
Unconscious of himself, and to the world unknown,
He walks at large among us.
Oras. Heavenly powers!
Zamti. This night, my friends, this very night to rise
Refulgent from a blow, that frees us all—
From the usurper's fate! the first of men,
Deliverer of his country!——
Oras. Mighty gods!
Can this be possible?
Zamti. It is most true.
I'll bring him to ye straight—(*calling to Etan, within the tomb*) What ho! come forth—
You seem transfixed with wonder! oh! my friends,
Watch all the motions of your rising spirit,
Direct your ardour, when anon you hear
What fate, long pregnant with the vast event,
Is labouring into birth.

ETAN *comes out of the tomb.*

Etan. Each step I move
A deeper horror sits on all the tombs;
Each shrine, each altar seems to shake, as if
Conscious of some important crisis.
Zamti. Yes!
A crisis, great indeed, is now at hand!
Heaven holds it's golden balance forth, and weighs
Zaphimri's and the Tartar's destiny,
While hovering angels tremble round the beam.
Hast thou beheld that picture?

Etan. Fixed attention
Hath paused on every part; yet still to me
It shadows forth the forms of things unknown;
All imagery obscure, and wrapt in darkness.
Zamti. That darkness my informing breath shall clear,
As morn dispels the night. Lo! here displayed
This mighty kingdom's fall.——
Etan. Alas! my father,
At sight of these sad colourings of woe,
Our tears will mix with honest indignation.
Zamti. Nay, but survey it closer——see that child,
That royal infant, the last sacred relic
Of China's ancient line—see where a mandarin
Conveys the babe to his wife's fostering breast,
There to be nourished in an humble state;
While their own son is sent to climes remote,
That, should the dire usurper e'er suspect
The prince alive, he, in his stead, might bleed,
And mock the murderer's rage.
Etan. Amazement thrills
Through all my frame, and my mind, big with wonder,
Feels every power suspended!
Zamti. Rather say,
That strong imagination burns within thee——
Dost thou not feel a more than common ardour?
Etan. By Heaven! my soul dilates with some new impulse;
Some strange inspired emotion—Would the hour
Of fate were come!—this night my dagger's hilt
I'll bury in the tyrant's heart.
Zamti. Wilt thou?
Etan. By all the mighty dead, that round us lie,
By all who this day groan in chains, I will.
Zamti. And when thou dost—then tell him 'tis the prince
That strikes!
Etan. The prince's wrongs shall nerve my arm
With tenfold rage.
Zamti. Nay, but the prince himself!
Etan. What says my father?
Zamti. Thou art China's orphan;
The last of all our kings—no longer Etan,
But now Zaphimri!
Zaph. Ha!
Oras. O wondrous hand
Of Heaven!
Zaph. A crowd of circumstances rise——
Thy frequent hints obscure——thy pious care
To train my youth to greatness.—Lend your aid
To my astonished powers, that feebly bear
This unexpected shock of royalty!
Zamti. Thou noble youth, now put forth all your strength,
And let Heaven's vengeance brace each sinew.
Zaph. Vengeance!
That word has shot its lighting through my soul.
But tell me, Zamti—still 'tis wonder all——
Am I, indeed, the royal orphan?
Zamti. Thou——
Thou art the king, whom, as my humble son,
I've nurtured in humanity and virtue.
Thy foes could never think to find thee here,
Even in the lion's den; and therefore here
I've fixed thy safe asylum, while my son
Hath dragged his life in exile.—Oh! my friends,
Morat will tell ye all—each circumstance.
Meantime—there is your king!
[*All kneel to him.*
Oras. } Long live the father of the eastern
Zim. } world!
Zamti. Sole governor of earth!——
Zaph. All-ruling powers!
Is then a great revenge for all the wrongs
Of bleeding China—are the fame and fate
Of all posterity included here
Within my bosom? [*They all rise.*
Zamti. Yes; they are:—the shades
Of your great ancestors now rise before thee,
Heroes and demi-gods——Aloud they call
For the fell Tartar's blood.
Zaph. Oh, Zamti! all,
That can alarm the powers of man, now stirs
In this expanding breast——
Zamti. Anon to burst,
With hideous ruin, on the foe.——My gallant heroes,
Are our men stationed at their posts?
Oras. They are.
Zamti. Is every gate secured?
Oras. All safe.
Zamti. The signal fixed?
Oras. It is.—Will Mirvan join us?
Zamti. Doubt him not.
In bitterness of soul he counts his wrongs,
And pants for vengeance——would have joined ye here,
But, favoured as he is, his post requires him
About the Tartar's person. The assault begun,
He'll turn his arms upon the astonished foe,
And add new horrors to the wild commotion.
Zaph. Now, bloody spoiler! now thy hour draws nigh,
And, ere the dawn, thy guilty reign shall end.
Zamti. How my heart burns within me!—Oh! my friends,
Call now to mind the scene of desolation,
Which Timurkan, in one accursed hour,
Heaped on this groaning land!—Even now I see
The savage bands, o'er reeking hills of dead,
Forcing their rapid way.—I see them urge,
With rage unhallowed, to this sacred temple,
Where good Osmintgi, with his queen and children,
Fatigued the gods averse. See where Arphisa,
Rending the air with agonizing shrieks,
Tears her dishevelled hair:—then, with a look
Fixed on her babes, grief choaks its passage up,
And all the feelings of a mother's breast
Throbbing in one mixed pang, breathless she faints
Within her husband's arms. Adown his cheek,
In copious streams, fast flowed the manly sorrow;

While, clustering round his knees, his little offspring,
In tears all-eloquent, with arms outstretched,
Sue for parental aid.——
Zaph. Go on—the tale
Will fit me for a scene of horror.
Zamti. Oh! my prince,
The charge, which your great father gave me, still
Sounds in my ear. Ere yet the foe burst in,
'Zamti,' said he—Ah! that imploring eye!
That agonizing look!——
'Preserve my little boy, my cradled infant—
'Shield him from ruffians——train his youth to virtue:——
'Virtue will rouse him to a great revenge;
'Or failing, virtue shall still make him happy.'
He could no more—the cruel spoiler seized him
And dragged my king—my ever honoured king—
The father of his people—basely dragged him,
By his white reverend locks, from yonder altar,
Here—on the blood-stained pavement; while the queen,
And her dear fondlings, in one mingled heap,
Died in each other's arms!
Zaph. Revenge! revenge!
With more than lion's nerve I'll spring upon him,
And at one blow relieve the groaning world.
Let us this moment carry sword and fire
To yon devoted walls, and whelm him down
In ruin and dismay!
Zamti. Zaphimri, no.
By rashness you may mar a noble cause.
To you, my friends, I render up my charge——
To you I give your king. Farewell, my sovereign!
Zaph. Thou good, thou godlike man!—a thousand feelings
Of warmest friendship—all the tendencies
Of heart-felt gratitude are struggling here,
And fain would speak to thee, my more than father!
—Farewell!—sure we shall meet again!
Zamti. We shall——
Zaph. Farewell!—Zamti, farewell!—[*Embraces him.*]—Orasming, now
The noblest duty calls us. Now remember
We are the men, whom, from all human kind,
Our fate hath now selected, to come forth
Asserters of the public weal;—to drench our swords
In the oppressor's heart;—to do a deed
Which Heaven, intent on its own holy work,
Shall pause with pleasure to behold.
[*Exit, with conspirators.*
Zamti. May the Most High
Pour down his blessings on him! and anon,
In the dead waste of night, when awful justice
Walks, with her crimson steel, o'er slaughtered heaps
Of groaning Tartars, may he then direct
His youthful footsteps through the paths of peril!
Oh, may he guide the horrors of the storm,
An angel of your wrath, to point your vengeance
On every guilty head! Then, then 'twill be enough;
When you have broken the oppressor's rod,
Your reign will then be manifest—Mankind will see
That truth and goodness still obtain your care—
[*A dead march.*
What mean those deathful sounds?—Again!—They lead
My boy to slaughter!—Oh! look down, ye Heavens!
Look down propitious!—Teach me to subdue
That nature which ye gave!——— [*Exit.*

A dead march. *Enter* HAMET, OCTAR, *Guards, &c.*

Octar. Here let the victim fall, and with his blood
Wash his forefathers' tomb. Here ends the hated race.
The eastern world, through all her wide domain,
Shall then submissive feel the Scythian yoke,
And yield to Timurkan.
Hamet. [*Standing by the tomb.*] Where is the tyrant? I would have him see,
With envy see, the unconquered power of Virtue;
How it can calmly bleed, smile on his racks,
And with strong pinion soar above his power,
To regions of perennial day.
Octar. The father
Of the whole eastern world shall mark thee well,
When, at to-morrow's dawn, thy breathless corse
Is borne through all our streets for public view.
It now befits thee to prepare for death.
Hamet. I am prepared. I have no lust or rapine,
No murders to repent of. Undismayed,
I can behold all-judging Heaven, whose hand,
Still compassing it's wondrous ends, by means
Inextricable to all mortal clue,
Hath now inclosed me in it's awful maze.
Since 'tis by your decree that, thus beset,
The inexorable angel hovers o'er me,
Be your great bidding done!
Octar. The sabre's edge
Thirsts for his blood—then let it's lightning fall
On his aspiring head. [*Guards seize Hamet.*
Man. [*within*] Off—set me free!—inhuman, barbarous ruffians!——
Octar. What means that woman with dishevelled hair,
And wild extravagance of woe?
Man. My griefs
Scorn all restraint—I must—I will have way!
[*She enters, and throws herself on her knees.*
Me—me—on me convert your rage—plunge deep,
Deep in this bosom your abhorred steel,
But spare his precious life!
Octar. Hence, quickly bear
This wild, this frantic woman!
Man. Never, never——
You shall not force me hence. Here will I cling

Fast to the earth, and rivet here my hands,
In all the fury of the last despair!
He is my child!——my dear, dear son!
Octar. How, woman!
Said'st thou your son?
Man. Yes, Octar, mine;—my son,
My boy—my Hamet! [*she rises, and embraces him*] Let my eager love
Fly all unbounded to him—oh! my child!—my child!
Octar. Suspend the stroke, ye ministers of death,
Till Timurkan hear of this new event.
Meantime, thou, Mirvan, speed in quest of Zamti,
And let him answer here this wondrous tale.
[*Exit.*
Mir. The time demands his presence; or despair
May wring each secret from her tender breast;
[*Aside.*
And then our glorious, fancied pile of freedom,
At one dire stroke, shall tumble into nought.
[*Exit.*
Man. Why did'st thou dare return?—ah! rather
Did'st thou so long defer, with every grace,
And every growing virtue, thus to raise
Your mother's dear delight to rapture?
Hamet. Lost
In the deep mists of darkling ignorance,
To me my birth's unknown—but sure that look,
Those tears, those shrieks, that animated grief,
Defying danger, all declare the effect
Of Nature's strugglings in a parent's heart.
Then let me pay my filial duty here,
Kneel to her native dignity, and pour
In tears of joy the transport of a son!
Man. Thou art, thou art my son!—thy father's face,
His ev'ry feature, blooming in his boy!
Oh! tell me, tell me all—how hast thou lived
With faithful Morat!—how did he support
In dreary solitude thy tender years?—
How train thy growing mind?—oh! quickly tell me,
Oh! tell me all, and charm me with thy tongue!
Hamet. Mysterious Powers! have I then lived to this,
In the hour of peril thus to find a parent,
In virtue firm, majestic in distress,
At length to feel unutterable bliss
In her dear circling arms——— [*They embrace.*

Enter TIMURKAN, OCTAR, *&c.*

Timur. Where is this wild
Outrageous woman, who, with headlong grief,
Suspends my dread command?—Tear them asunder!
Send her to some dark cell to rave and shriek,
And dwell with madness—and let instant death
Leave that rash youth a headless trunk before me.
Man. Now, by the ever-burning lamps that light
Our holy shrines, by great Confucius' altar,
By the prime source of life, and light, and being,
That is my child, the blossom of my joys!
Send for his cruel father—he—'tis he
Intends a fraud—he, for a stranger's life,
Would yield his offspring to the cruel axe,
And rend a wretched mother's brain with madness!

Enter ZAMTI.

Zamti. Sure the sad accents of Mandane's voice
Struck on my frighted sense!
Timur. Once more, thou slave!
Who is that stubborn youth?
Zamti. Alas! what needs
This iteration of my griefs?
Man. Oh! horror!—horror!
Thou marble-hearted father!—'tis your child,
And wouldst thou see him bleed?
Zamti. On him!—on him
Let fall your rage, and ease my soul at once
Of all it's fears!
Man. Oh! my devoted child!— [*She faints.*
Hamet. Support her, Heaven! support her tender frame!——
Now, tyrant, now I beg to live—[*kneels*] lo! here
I plead for life; not for the wretched boon
To breathe the air, which thy ambition taints;
But oh! to ease a mother's pains; for her,
For that dear object—oh! let me live for her!
Timur. Now by the conquests this good sword has won,
In her wild vehemence of grief I hear
The genuine voice of nature.
Man. [*Recovering.*] Ah! where is he?
He is my son! my child! and not Zaphimri!
Oh! let me clasp thee to my heart! thy hard,
Thy cruel father shall not tear thee from me!
Timur. Hear me, thou frantic mourner, dry those tears—
Perhaps you still may save this darling son,
Man. Ah! quickly name the means!
Timur. Give up your king,
Your phantom of a king, to sate my vengeance.
Hamet. Oh! my much honoured mother, never hear
The base, the dire proposal! let me rather
Exhaust my life-blood at each gushing vein.
Mandane, then—then you may well rejoice
To find your child—then you may truly know
The best delight a mother's heart can prove,
When her son dies with glory.
Timur. Curses blast
The stripling's pride! [*Talks apart with Octar.*
Zamti. Ye venerable host,
Ye mighty shades of China's royal line,
Forgive the joy that mingles with my tears,

When I behold him still alive! Propitious powers!
You never meant entirely to destroy
This bleeding country, when your kind indulgence
Lends us a youth like him.
Oh! I can hold no more—let me enfold
That lovely ardour in his father's arms—
My brave—my generous boy! [*Embraces him.*
Timur. Dost thou at length
Confess it, traitor?
Zamti. Yes, I boast it, tyrant;
Boast it to thee—to earth and heaven I boast,
This—this is Zamti's son!
Hamet. At length the hour,
The glorious hour is come, by Morat promised,
When Hamet shall not blush to know his father.
[*Kneels to him.*
Zamti. Oh! thou intrepid youth! what bright reward
Can your glad sire bestow on such desert?
The righteous gods, and your own inward feelings
Shall give the sweetest retribution. Now,
Mandane, now my soul forgives thee all,
Since I have made acquaintance with my son:
Thy lovely weakness I can now excuse;
But oh! I charge thee by a husband's right——
Timur. A husband's right! a traitor has no right—
Society disclaims him—Woman, hear——
Mark well my words—Discolour not thy soul
With the black hue of crimes like his—renounce
All hymeneal vows, and take again
Your much-loved boy to his fond mother's arms,
While justice whirls that traitor to his fate.
Man. Thou vile adviser!—what, betray my lord,
My honoured husband? Turn a Scythian wife?
Forget the many years of fond delight,
In which my soul ne'er knew decreasing love,
Charmed with his noble, all-accomplished mind?
No, tyrant, no! with him I will rather die;
With him in ruin more supremely blest,
Than guilt triumphant on its throne.
Zamti. Now then,
Inhuman Tartar, I defy thy power.
Lo! here, the father, mother, and the son!
Try all your tortures on us—here we stand,
Resolved to leave a tract of bright renown
To mark our beings—all resolved to die
The votaries of honour!
Timur. Then die ye shall—what, ho! guards, seize the slaves,
Deep in some baleful dungeon's midnight gloom,
Let each apart be plunged—and Etan too—
Let him be forthwith found—he too shall share
His father's fate.
Mir. Be it my task, dread sir,
To make the rack ingenious in new pains,
Till even cruelty almost relent
At their keen, agonizing groans.
Timur. Be that,
Mirvan, thy care. Now, by the immortal Lama,
I will wrest this mystery from them—else the dawn
Shall see me up in arms—against Corea's chief
I will unfurl my banners—his proud cities
Shall dread my thunder at their gates, and mourn
Their smoaking ramparts—o'er his verdant plains
And peaceful vales I will drive my warlike car,
And deluge all the east with blood. [*Exit.*
Octar. Mirvan, do thou bear hence those miscreant slaves;
Thou, Zamti, art my charge.
[*Laying hold of him.*
Zamti. Willing I come— [*Shakes him off.*
The steady mind can scorn your mansions drear,
And brighten horror with its noon-tide ray.
Mandane, summon all thy strength. My son,
Thy father doubts not of thy fortitude.
[*Exit, guarded by Octar.*
Man. Allow me but one last embrace—
Hamet. Oh! mother, [*To the Guards.*
Would I could rescue thee!
Man. Lost, lost again!
Hamet. Inhuman, bloody Tartars!
Oh! farewell!——[*Both together.*]
[*Exeunt, on different sides.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*A prison.* HAMET *in chains.*

Enter ZAPHIMRI, *(disguised in a Tartar dress) with* MIRVAN.

Mir. THERE stretched at length on the dark ground he lies,
Scorning his fate. Your meeting must be short.
Zaph. It shall——
Mir. And yet I tremble for the event:
Why wouldst thou venture to this place of danger!
Zaph. And canst thou deem me, then, so mean of spirit,
To dwell secure in ignominious safety,
With cold insensibility to wait
The lingering hours—with coward patience wait them,
Deliberating on myself, while ruin
Nods over Zamti's house?
Mir. Yet whilst thou art here,
Thy fate's suspended on each dreadful moment.
Zaph. I will hold converse with him, even though death
Were armed against the interview. [*Exit Mirvan.*
Hamet. [*Still on the ground.*] What wouldst thou, Tartar?

Zaph. Rise, noble youth——no vulgar errand mine——
Hamet. [*Comes forward.*[Now speak thy purpose.
Zaph. Under this disguise——
Hamet. If under that disguise, a murderer's dagger
Thirst for my blood—thus I can meet the blow.
[*Throwing himself open.*
Zaph. No ruffian's purpose lurks within this bosom.
To these lone walls, where oft the Scythian stabber,
With murderous stride, hath come; these walls that oft
Have seen the assassin's deeds—I bring a mind
Firm, virtuous, upright. Under this vile garb,
Lo! here a son of China. [*Opens his dress.*
Hamet. Yes, thy garb
Denotes a son of China; and those eyes
Roll with no black intent. Say on——
Zaph. Inflamed with admiration of heroic deeds,
I come to seek acquaintance with the youth,
Who for his king would bravely die!
Hamet. Say then,
Dost thou applaud the deed?
Zaph. By Heaven, I do.
Yes, virtuous envy rises in my soul—
Thy ardour charms me, and even now I pant
To change conditions with thee.
Hamet. Then my heart
Accepts thy proffered friendship. In a base,
A prone, degenerate age, when foreign force
And foreign manners have o'erwhelmed us all,
And sunk our native genius—thou retainest
A sense of antient worth. But wherefore here,
To this sad mansion, this abode of sorrow,
Com'st thou to know a wretch that soon must die?
Zaph. By Heaven, thou shalt not die—I come to speak
The gladsome tidings of a happier fate,
By me Zaphimri sends——
Hamet. Zaphimri sends!
Kind powers! Where is the king?
Zaph. His steps are safe;
Unseen as is the arrow's path. By me he says,
He knows, he loves, he wonders at thy virtue.
By me he swears, rather than thou should'st fall,
He will emerge from dark obscurity,
And greatly brave his fate.
Hamet. Ha! die for me!
For me, ignoble in the scale of being!
An unimportant wretch! Whoe'er thou art,
I prithee, stranger, bear my answer back—
Oh! tell my sovereign that here dwells a heart
Superior to all peril. When I fall,
A worm—an insect dies! But in his life
Are wrapped the glories of our ancient line,
The liberties of China! Then let him
Live for his people—be it mine to die.
Zaph. Can I bear this, ye powers, and not dissolve
In tears of gratitude and love? [*Aside.*
Hamet. Why streams
That flood of grief? and why that stifled groan?
Through the dark mist his sorrow casts around him,
He seems no common man. Say, generous youth,
Who, and what art thou?
Zaph. Who, and what am I?
Thou lead'st me to a precipice, from whence
Downward to look, turns wild the maddening brain,
Scared at the unfathomable deep below.
Who, and what am I? Oh! the veriest wretch,
That ever yet groaned out his soul in anguish!
One lost, abandoned, hopeless, plunged in woe
Beyond redemption's aid. To tell thee all
In one dire word, big with the last distress,
In one accumulated term of horror——
Zaphimri!——
Hamet. Said'st thou!——
Zaph. He!—that fatal wretch,
Exalted into misery supreme.
Oh! I was happy, while, good Zamti's son,
I walked the common tracts of life, and strove
Humbly to copy my imagined sire.
But now——
Hamet. Yes, now—if thou art he—as sure
'Tis wond'rous like—raised to a state, in which
A nation's happiness on thee depends—
Zaph. A nation's happiness! There, there I bleed!
There are my pangs! For me this war began,
For me hath purple slaughter drenched yon fields;
I am the cause of all. I forged those chains—
For Zamti and Mandane too—Oh! Heavens!—
Them have I thrown into a dungeon's gloom.
These are the horrors of Zaphimri's reign.
I am the tyrant!—I ascend the throne,
By trampling on the neck of innocence—
By base ingratitude! by the vile means
Of selfish cowardice, that can behold
Thee, and thy father, mother, all in chains,
All lost, all murdered, that I thence may rise
Inglorious to a throne!
Hamet. Alas! thy spirit,
Thy wild disordered fancy pictures forth
Ills that are not—or, being ills, not worth
A moment's pause.
Zaph. Not ills! Thou canst not mean it.
Oh! I am environed with the worst of woes!
The angry fates, amidst their hoards of vengeance,
Had nought but this—they meant to render me
Peculiarly distressed. Tell me, thou gallant youth—
A soul like thine knows every fine emotion—
Is there a nerve, in which the heart of man
Can prove such torture, as when thus it meets

Unequalled friendship, honour, truth, and love,
And no return can make?———Oh! tis too much,
Ye mighty gods, too much—thus, thus to be
A feeble prince, a shadow of a king,
Without the power to wreak revenge on guilt,
Without the power of doing virtue right!
Hamet. That power will come.
Zaph. But when?—when thou art lost,
When Zamti and Mandane are destroyed.
Oh for a dagger's point, to plunge it deep,
Deep in this—ha! deep in the tyrant's heart!
Hamet. There your revenge should point. For that great deed
Heaven hath watched all thy ways; and wilt thou, now,
With headlong rage spurn at its guardian care,
Nor wait the movements of eternal justice?
Zaph. Ha!—whither has my frenzy strayed? Yes, Heaven
Has been all-bounteous Righteous powers!
To you my orisons are due—But oh!
Complete your goodness: save this valiant youth:
Save Zamti's house; and then—if such your will,
That from the Tartar's head my arm this night
Shall grasp the crown of China—teach me, then,
To bear your dread vicegerency—I stand
Resigned to your high will.
Hamet. And Heaven, I trust,
Will still preserve thee; in its own good time
Will finish its decrees.
Zaph. Yes, Hamet, yes;
A gleam of hope remains. Should Timurkan
Defer his murder to the midnight hour,
Then will I come, then burst these guilty walls,
Rend those vile manacles, and give thee freedom.
Hamet. Oh! no—you must not risk.
Zaph. A band of heroes
For this are ready; honourably leagued
To vindicate their rights. Thy father's care
Planned and inspired the whole. Among the troops,
Nay, in his very guards, there are not wanting
Some gallant sons of China, in that hour,
Who will discover their long pent-up fury,
And deal destruction round.
Hamet. What—all convened,
And every thing disposed?
Zaph. Determined!—Now
In silent terror all intent they stand,
And wait the signal in each gale that blows.
Hamet. Why didst thou venture forth?
Zaph. What! poorly lurk
While my friends die!—that thought—but, generous youth,
I'll not think meanly of thee—No—that thought
Is foreign to thy heart.
Hamet. But think, my prince,
On China's wrongs, the dying heroes' groans;
Think on thy ancestors.

Zaph. My ancestors!
What is it to me a long-descended line,
A race of worthies, legislators, heroes,
Unless I bring their virtues too? No more—
Thy own example fires me. Near this place
I'll take my stand, and watch their busy motions,
Until the general roar; then will I come,
And arm thee for the assault.
Hamet. Oh! if thou dost,
Yet once again I'll wield the deathful blade,
And bear against the foe.
Zaph. Yes, thou and I
Will rush together through the paths of death,
Mow down our way, and with sad overthrow
Pursue the Tartar—like two rushing torrents,
That from the mountain's top, 'midst roaring caves,
'Midst rocks and rent-up trees, foam headlong down,
And each depopulates his way.——
[*A flourish of trumpets.*
Hamet. What means
That sudden and wild harmony?
Zaph. Even now
The conqueror, and his fell barbaric rout,
For this day's victory indulge their joy;
Joy soon to end in groans—for all conspires
To forward our design—and lo! the lights
That whilom blazed to heaven, now rarely seen,
Shed a pale glimmer, and the foe secure
Sinks down in deep debauch; while all awake,
The genius of this land broods o'er the work
Of justice and revenge.
Hamet. Oh! revel on!
Still unsuspecting plunge in guilty joy,
And bury thee in riot!
Zaph. Ne'er again
To wake from that vile trance—for, ere the dawn,
Detested spoiler, thy hot blood shall smoke
On the stained marble, and thy limbs abhorred
I'll scatter to the dogs of China.

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Break off your conference—Octar this way comes.
Zaph. This garb will cloak me from each hostile eye;
Thou need'st not fear detection.

Enter OCTAR.

Mir. There's your prisoner.
[*Pointing to Hamet.*
Octar. Lead him to where Mandane's matron grief
Rings through yon vaulted roof.
Hamet. Oh! lead me to her!
Let me give balm to her afflicted mind,
And soften anguish in a parent's breast.
[*Exit with Mirvan.*

Zaph. What may this mean? I dread some lurking mischief.

[*Exit on the opposite side.*

Octar. When the boy clings around his mother's heart
In fond endearment, then to tear him from her,
Will once again awaken all her tenderness,
And, in her impotence of grief, the truth
At length will burst its way. But Timurkan
Impatient comes.

Enter TIMURKAN.

Thus with disordered looks,
Why will my sovereign shun the genial banquet,
To seek a dungeon's gloom?

Timur. Oh, valiant Octar!
A more than midnight gloom involves my soul.
Hast thou beheld this stubborn mandarin?

Octar. I have; and tried, by every threatened vengeance,
To bend his soul: unconquered yet by words,
He smiles contempt; as if some inward joy,
Like the sun, labouring in a night of clouds,
Shot forth its gladdening unresisted beams,
Cheering the face of woe.

Timur. What of Mandane?

Octar. At first with tears and bitter lamentations,
She called on Hamet lost; but when I urged,
She still might save her boy, and save herself,
Would she but give Zaphimri to your wrath,
Her tears forgot to flow; her voice, her look,
Her colour sudden changed, and all her form,
Enlarging with the emotions of her soul,
Grew vaster to the sight. With blood-shot eyes
She cast a look of silent indignation,
Then turned in sullen mood away.

Timur. Perdition
O'erwhelm her pride!

Octar. Might I advise you, sir,
An artful tale of love should softly glide
To her afflicted soul—a conqueror's sighs
Will waft a thousand wishes to her heart,
Till female vanity aspire to reach
The eastern throne; and when her virtue melts
In the soft tumult of her gay desires,
Win from her every truth, then spurn to shame
The weak, deluded woman.

Timur. Octar, no:
I cannot stoop with love-sick adulation
To thrill in languishing desire, and try
The hopes, the fears, and the caprice of love.
Inured to rougher scenes, far other arts
My mind employed: to sling the well-stored quiver
Over this manly arm, and wing the dart
At the fleet rein-deer, sweeping down the vale,
Or up the mountain, straining every nerve;
To vault the neighing steed, and urge his course
Swifter than whirlwinds; through the ranks of war
To drive my chariot-wheels, smoking with gore:
These are my passions, this my only science,
Above the puling sicknesses of love.
Bring that vile slave, the hoary priest, before me.

[*Exit Octar.*

By Heaven, their fortitude erects a fence,
To shield them from my wrath, more powerful far
Than their high-boasted wall, which long hath stood
The shock of time, of war, of storms, and thunder,
The wonder of the world!
What art thou, Virtue, who can'st thus inspire
This stubborn pride, this dignity of soul,
And still unfading, beauteous in distress,
Can'st taste of joys my heart hath never known?

Enter ZAMTI, *in chains.*

Mark me, thou traitor! thy detested sight
Once more I brook, to try if yet the sense
Of deeds, abhorred as thine, has touched your soul.
Or clear this mystery, or, by yonder Heaven,
I'll hunt Zaphimri to his secret haunt,
Or spread a general carnage round the world.

Zamti. Thy rage is vain—far from thy ruthless power
Kind Heaven protects him, till the awful truth,
In some dread hour of horror and revenge,
Shall burst, like thunder, on thee.

Timur. Ha! beware——
Nor rouse my lion-rage—yet, ere 'tis late,
Repent thee of thy crimes.

Zamti. The crime would be
To yield to thy unjust commands. But know,
A louder voice than thine forbids the deed;
The voice of all my kings! Forth from their tombs,
Even now, they send a peal of groans to Heaven,
Where all thy murders are long since gone up,
And stand in dread array against thee.

Timur. Murders!
Ungrateful mandarin! Say, did not I,
When civil discord lighted up her brand,
And scattered wide her flames—when fierce contention
'Twixt Xohohamti and Zaphimri's father
Sorely convulsed the realm—did not I, then,
Lead forth my Tartars from their northern frontier,
And bid fair order rise?

Zamti. Bid order rise!
Hast thou not smote us with a hand of wrath?
By thee each art has died, and every science
Gone out at thy fell blast. Art thou not come
To sack our cities, to subvert our temples,
The temples of our gods, and with the worship,
The monstrous worship, of your living Lama,
Profane our holy shrines?

Timur. Peace, insolent!
Nor dare, with horrid treason, to provoke
The wrath of injured majesty.

Zamti. Yes, tyrant!

Yes, thou hast smote us with a hand of wrath;
Full twenty years hast smote us; but at length
Will come the hour of Heaven's just visitation,
When thou shalt rue——hear me, thou man of blood——
Yes, thou shalt rue the day, when thy fell rage
Imbrued those hands in royal blood. Now tremble——
The arm of the Most High is barred against thee—
And see!—the hand of fate describes thy doom,
In glaring letters, on yon rubied wall!
Each gleam of light is perished out of Heaven,
And darkness rushes o'er the face of earth.
Timur. Think'st thou, vile slave, with visionary fears,
I e'er can shrink appalled? Thou moon-struck seer!
No more I'll bear this mockery of words:
Or straight resolve me, or, by hell and vengeance,
Unheard of torment waits thee!
Zamti. Know'st thou not
I offered up my boy? And after that,
After that conflict, think'st thou there is aught
Zamti has left to fear?——
Timur. Yes; learn to fear
My will, my sovereign will, which here is law,
And treads upon the neck of slaves.
Zamti. Thy will
The law in China! Ill-instructed man!
Now learn an awful truth—Though ruffian power
May for a while suppress all sacred order,
And trample on the rights of man, the soul,
Which gave our legislation life and vigour,
Shall still subsist, above the tyrant's reach:——
The spirit of the laws can never die.
Timur. I'll hear no more. What, ho!

Enter OCTAR *and Guards.*

Bring forth Mandane——
Ruin involves ye all—this very hour
Shall see your son impaled: yes, both your sons.
Let Etan be brought forth.
Octar. Etan, my liege,
Is fled for safety.
Timur. Thou pernicious slave! [*To Zamti.*
Him, too, would'st thou withdraw from justice? him
Wouldst thou send hence to Corea's realm, to brood
O'er some new work of treason? By the powers
Who feel a joy in vengeance, and delight
In human blood, I will unchain my fury
On all, who trace Zaphimri in his years!
But chief on thee and thy devoted race.

Enter MANDANE *and* HAMET. MIRVAN *guarding them, &c.*

Timur. Woman, attend my words——instant reveal
This dark conspiracy, and save thyself.
If, wilful, thou wilt spurn the joys that woo thee,
The rack shall have its prey.
Man. It is in vain.
I tell thee, homicide, my soul is bound
By solemn vows: and wouldst thou have me break,
What angels wafted on their wings to Heaven?
Timur. Renounce your rash resolves, nor court destruction.
Man. Goddess of vengeance! from your realms above,
Where near the throne of the Most High thou dwellest,
Insphered in darkness, amidst hoards of thunder,
Serenely dreadful, till dire human crimes
Provoke thee down; now, on the whirlwind's wing
Descend, and, with your flaming sword, your bolts,
Red with almighty wrath, let loose your rage,
And blast this vile seducer in his guilt!
Timur. Blind frantic woman!—think on your loved boy.
Man. That tender struggle's o'er—if he must die,
I'll greatly dare to follow.
Timur. Then, forthwith
I'll put thee to the proof—Drag forth the boy
To instant death—— [*They seize Hamet.*
Hamet. Come on, then—Lead me hence
To some new world where justice reigns; for here
Thy iron hand is stretched o'er all.
[*Exit guarded.*
Timur. Quick, drag him forth.
Man. Now, by the powers above, by every tie
Of humanizing pity, seize me first;
Oh! spare my child, and end his wretched mother!
Timur. Thou pleadest in vain.

Enter a Messenger in haste.

Mess. Etan, dread sir, is found.
Zamti. Ah! China totters on the brink of ruin! [*Aside.*
Timur. Where lurked the slave?
Mess. Emerging from disguise,
He rushed amid the guards that led forth Hamet:
'Suspend the stroke,' he cried: then craved admittance
To your dread presence, on affairs, he says,
Of highest import to your throne and life.
Zamti. Ruin impends. [*Aside.*] Heed not an idle boy.—— [*To Timurkan.*
Timur. Yes, I will see him: bring him straight before me.
Zamti. Angels of light! quick on the rapid wing
Dart from the throne of grace, and hover round him!

Enter ZAPHIMRI, *Guards following him.*

Timur. Thou com'st on matters of importance deep
Unto my throne and life——
Zaph. I do. This very hour
Thy death is plotting.

Timur. Ha!——by whom?
Zaph. Zaphimri!
Zamti. What means my son?———
Timur. Quick, give him to my rage,
And mercy shall to thee extend.
Zaph. Think not
I meanly come to save this wretched being.
Pity Mandane—save her tender frame! [*Kneels.*
Pity that youth!—Oh! save that godlike man!
Zamti. Wilt thou dishonour me, degrade thyself,
Thy native dignity, by basely kneeling?
Quit that vile posture.
Timur. Rash intruder, hence.—— [*To Zamti.*
Hear me, thou stripling; or unfold thy tale,
Or by yon heaven they die——Wouldst thou appease my wrath,
Bring me Zaphimri's head.
Zaph. Will that suffice?
Zamti. Oh! Heavens! [*Aside.*
Timur. It will———
Zaph. Then take it, tyrant.
[*Rising up, and pointing to himself.*
Zamti and Hamet. Ah!——
Zaph. I am Zaphimri—I your mortal foe!
Zamti. Now, by yon heaven, it is not——
Zaph. Here——strike here——
Since nought but royal blood can quench thy thirst,
Unsluice these veins——but spare their matchless lives.
Timur. Wouldst thou deceive me too?
Zamti. He would——
Zaph. No——here,
Here on his knees, Zaphimri begs to die.
Zamti. Oh! horror, 'tis my son! by great Confucius,
That is my Etan, my too generous boy,
That fain would die to save his aged sire!
Man. Alas! all is ruined—freedom is no more! [*Aside.*
Zaph. Yet hear me, Tartar—hear the voice of truth—
I am your victim—by the gods, I am.
[*Laying hold of Timurkan.*
Timur. Thou early traitor! by your guilty sire
Trained up in fraud—no more these arts prevail.
My rage is up in arms, ne'er to know rest,
Until Zaphimri perish. Off, vile slave!
This very moment sweep them from my sight.
Man. Alas! my husband—Oh! my son—my son!
Zamti. May all the host of Heaven protect him still!
[*Exeunt Zamti and Mandane, guarded by Octar, &c.*

ZAPHIMRI, *struggling with* TIMURKAN, *on his knees.*

Zaph. Ah! yet withhold—in pity hold a moment—
I am Zaphimri—I resign my crown——
Timur. Away, vain boy! Go see them bleed; behold
How they will writhe in pangs; pangs doomed for thee,
And every stripling through the east. Vile slave, away! [*Breaks from him, and exit.*

ZAPHIMRI, *lying on the ground; officers and guards behind him.*

Oh! cruel! yet a moment—barbarous Scythians!
Wilt thou not open, earth, and take me down,
Down to thy caverns of eternal darkness,
From this supreme of woe? Here will I lie,
Here, on thy flinty bosom—with this breast
I'll harrow up my grave, and end at once
This powerless wretch—this ignominious king!
And sleeps almighty justice? Will it not
Now waken all its terrors? arm yon band
Of secret heroes with avenging thunder?
By Heaven that thought [*rising*] lifts up my kindling soul
With renovated fire. [*Aside.*] My glorious friends,
(Who now convene big with your country's fate)
When I am dead—oh! give me just revenge!
Let not my shade rise unatoned amongst ye;
Let me not die inglorious; make my fall,
With some great act of yet unheard-of vengeance,
Resound throughout the world; that farthest Scythia
May stand appalled at the huge distant roar
Of one vast ruin tumbling on the heads
Of this fell tyrant, and his hated race.
[*Exit, guarded.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The palace.*

Enter OCTAR, ZAMTI *and* MANDANE *following him.*

Zamti. WHY dost thou lead us to this hated mansion?
Must we again behold the tyrant's frown?
Thou know'st our hearts are fixed.
Octar. The war of words
We scorn again to wage: thither ye come
Beneath a monarch's eye to meet your doom.
The rack is now preparing: Timurkan
Shall soon behold your pangs, and count each groan
Even to the fullest luxury of vengeance.
Guard well that passage: [*To the guards within.*] See these traitors find
No means of flight; while to the conqueror
I hasten, to receive his last commands.
[*Exit Octar, on the opposite side.*

Zamti. Thou ever faithful creature!
Man. Can'st thou, Zamti,
Still call me faithful? By that honoured name
Wilt thou call her, whose wild maternal love
Hath overwhelmed us all?
Zamti. Thou art my wife,
Whose matchless excellence, even in bondage,
Hath cheered my soul; but now thy every charm,
By virtue wakened, kindled by distress
To higher lustre, all my passions beat
Unutterable gratitude and love.
And must—oh! cruel! must I see thee bleed?
Man. For me death wears no terror on his brow.
Full twenty years hath this resounding breast
Been smote with these sad hands; these haggard eyes
Have seen my country's fall; my dearest husband—
My son—my king—all in the Tartar's hands:
What then remains for me? Death! only death.
Zamti. Ah! can thy tenderness endure the pangs
Inventive cruelty even now designs?——
Must this fair form—this soft perfection bleed?
Thy decent limbs be strained with cruel cords
To glut a ruffian's rage?——
Man. Alas! this frame,
This feeble texture never can sustain it.
But this—this I can bear—— [*Shews a dagger.*
Zamti. Ha!
Man. Yes! this dagger!
Do thou but lodge it in this faithful breast,
My heart shall spring to meet thee.
Zamti. Oh!——
Man. Do thou,
My honoured lord, who taught me every virtue,
Afford this friendly, this last human office,
And teach me now to die.
Zamti. Oh! never——never——
Hence let me bear this fatal instrument.
[*Takes the dagger.*
What, to usurp the dread prerogative
Of life and death, and measure out the thread
Of our own beings! 'tis the coward's act,
Who dares not to encounter pain and peril.
Be that the practice of the untutored savage;
Be it the practice of the gloomy North.
Man. Must we, then, wait a haughty tyrant's nod,
The vassals of his will! No: let us rather
Nobly break through the barriers of this life,
And join the beings of some other world,
Who'll throng around our greatly daring souls,
And view the deed with wonder and applause.
Zamti. Distress too exquisite! Ye holy powr's!
If aught below can supersede your law,
And plead for wretches, who dare, self-impelled,
Rush to your awful presence; Oh! it is not
When the distempered passions rage, when pride
Is stung to madness, when ambition falls
From his high scaffolding; Oh! no. If aught
Can justify the blow, it is when Virtue
Has nothing left to do; when Liberty
No more can breathe at large; 'tis with the groans
Of our dear country when we dare to die.
Man. Then here at once direct the friendly steel.
Zamti. One last adieu! now! ah! does this become
Thy husband's love? thus, with uplifted blade,
Can I approach that bosom-bliss, where oft
With other looks than these—Oh! my Madane!
I've hushed my cares within thy sheltering arms?
Man. Alas! the loves, that hovered o'er our pillows,
Have spread their pinions, never to return,
And the pale fates surround us!
Then lay me down in honourable rest:
Come, as thou art, all hero, to my arms,
And free a virtuous wife.
Zamti. It must be so.
Now, then, prepare thee—My arm flags and droops,
Conscious of thee in every trembling nerve.
[*Dashes down the dagger.*
By Heaven, once more I would not raise the point
Against that hoard of sweets, for endless years
Of universal empire.
Man. Ha! the fell ministers of wrath—and yet
They shall not long insult us in our woes.
Myself will still preserve the means of death.
[*Takes up the dagger.*

Enter TIMURKAN *and* OCTAR.

Timur. Now, then, detested pair, your hour is come—
Drag forth these slaves to instant death and torment.
I hate this dull delay; I burn to see them
Gasping in death, and weltering in their gore.
Man. Zamti, support my steps—with thee to die
Is all the boon Mandane now would crave.
[*Exeunt Mandane and Zamti.*
Timur. Those rash, presumptuous boys, are they brought forth?
Octar. Mirvan will lead the victims to their fate.
Timur. And yet what boots their death? the Orphan lives,
And in this breast fell horror and remorse
Must be the dire inhabitants. Oh! Octar,
These midnight visions shake my inmost soul!
Octar. And shall the shadowings of a feverish brain
Disturb a conqueror's breast?
Timur. Octar, they've made
Such desolation here—'tis drear and horrible!
On yonder couch, soon as sleep closed my eyes,
All that yon mad enthusiastic priest

In mystic rage denounced, rose to my view;
And ever and anon a livid flash,
From conscience shot, shewed to my aching sight
The colours of my guilt——
Billows of blood were round me; and the ghosts,
The ghosts of heroes, by my rage destroyed,
Came with their ghastly orbs, and streaming wounds.
They stalked around my bed; with loud acclaim
They called Zaphimri! 'midst the lightning's blaze
Heaven rolled consenting thunders o'er my head;
Straight from his covert the youth sprung upon me,
And shook his gleaming steel—he hurled me down,
Down, headlong down the drear——Hold, hold! where am I?
Oh! this dire whirl of thought—my brain's on fire!

Octar. Compose this wild disorder of thy soul.
Your foes this moment die.

Enter MIRVAN.

Timur. What wouldst thou, Mirvan?

Mir. Near to the eastern gate, a slave reports,
As on his watch he stood, a gleam of arms
Cast a dim lustre through the night; and straight
The steps of men thick sounded in his ear:
In close array they marched.

Timur. Some lurking treason!——
What, ho! my arms—ourself will sally forth.

Mir. My liege, their scanty and rash-levied crew
Want not a monarch's sword—the valiant Octar,
Joined by yon faithful guard, will soon chastise them.

Timur. Then be it so—Octar, draw off the guard,
And bring their leaders, bound in chains, before me. [*Exit Octar.*

Mir. With sure conviction we have further learned
The long-contended truth—Etan's their king—
The traitor Zamti counted but one son;
And him he sent far hence to Corea's realm,
That, should it e'er be known the prince survived,
The boy might baffle justice.

Timur. Ha! this moment
Ourself will see him fall.

Mir. Better, my liege,
At this dead hour you sought repose—meantime
Justice on him shall hold her course. Your foes
Else might still urge that you delight in blood.
The semblance of humanity will throw
A veil upon ambition's deeds—'tis thus
That mighty conquerors thrive; and even vice,
When it would prosper, borrows virtue's mein.

Timur. Mirvan, thou counsell'st right: beneath a shew
Of public weal we lay the nations waste.
And yet these eyes shall never know repose,
Till they behold Zaphimri perish. Mirvan,
Attend me forth.

Mir. Forgive, my sovereign liege,
Forgive my over-forward zeal——I knew
It was not fitting he should breathe a moment:
The truth once known, I rushed upon the victim,
And, with this sabre, cleft him to the ground.

Timur. Thanks to great Lama! treason is no more,
And their boy king is dead. Mirvan, do thou
This very night bring me the stripling's head.
Soon as the dawn shall purple yonder east,
Aloft, in air, all China shall behold it,
Parched by the sun, and weltering to the wind:
Haste, Mirvan, haste, and sate my fondest wish.

Mir. This hour approves my loyalty and truth. [*Exit.*

Timur. Their deep-laid plot hath missed its aim, and Timurkan
May reign secure. No longer horrid dreams
Shall hover round my couch: the prostrate world
Henceforth shall learn to own my sovereign sway.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, Mirvan, hast thou brought the wished-for pledge?

Mir. My liege, I fear 'twill strike thy soul with horror!

Timur. By Heaven, the sight will glad my longing eyes!
Oh! give it to me!

Enter ZAPHIMRI *(a sabre in his hand) and plants himself before the tyrant.*

Ha! then all is lost.

Zaph. Now, bloody Tartar, now then, know Zaphimri.

Timur. Accursed treason! To behold thee thus
Alive before me, blasts my aching eye-balls:
My blood forgets to move; each power dies in me.

Zaph. Well may'st thou tremble, well may guilt like thine
Shrink back appalled; for now avenging Heaven
In me sends forth its minister of wrath,
To deal destruction on thee.

Timur. Treacherous slave!
'Tis false—with coward art, a base assassin,
A midnight ruffian, on my peaceful hour
Secure thou com'st; thus to assault a warrior
Thy heart could never dare to meet in arms.

Zaph. Not meet thee, Tartar? ha! in me thou seest
One on whose head unnumbered wrongs thou'st heaped;
Else could I scorn thee, thus defenceless. Yes,
By all my great revenge, could bid thee try each shape,
Assume each horrid form, come forth arrayed
In all the terrors of destructive guilt;

But now a dear, a murdered father calls;
He lifts my arm to rivet thee to earth,
The avenger of mankind.
Mir. Fall on, my prince.
Timur. By Heaven, I'll dare thee still. Resign it, slave,
Resign thy blade to nobler hands.
[*Snatches Mirvan's sabre.*
Mir. Oh! horror!
What, ho! bring help!—Let not the fate of China
Hang on the issue of a doubtful combat.
Timur. Come on, presumptuous boy!
Zaph. Inhuman regicide!
Now, lawless ravager, Zaphimri comes
To wreak his vengeance on thee.
[*Exeunt fighting.*
Mir. Oh! nerve his arm, ye powers, and guide each blow!

Enter HAMET.

Mir. See there! behold—he darts upon his prey.
Zaph. [*within.*] Die, bloodhound, die!
Timur. [*within.*] May curses blast my arm,
That failed so soon!
Hamet. The Tartar drops his point.
Zaphimri now——
Timur. [*within.*] Have mercy! mercy! oh!
Zaph. [*within.*] Mercy was never thine. This, fell destroyer,
This, for a nation's groans!
Mir. The monster dies;
He quivers on the ground. Then let me fly
To Zamti and Mandane with the tidings,
And call them back to liberty and joy.
[*Exit Mirvan.*

Enter ZAPHIMRI.

Zaph. Now, Hamet, now oppression is no more:
This smoking blade hath drunk the tyrant's blood.
Hamet. China again is free! There lies the corse
That breathed destruction to the world.
Zaph. Yes, there,
Tyrannic guilt, behold thy fatal end,
The wages of thy sins.

Enter MORAT.

Morat. Where is the king?
Revenge now stalks abroad. Our valiant leaders,
True to the destined hour, at once broke forth
From every quarter on the astonished foe:
Octar is fallen; all covered o'er with wounds
He met his fate; and still the slaughtering sword
Invades the city, sunk in sleep and wine.
Zaph. Lo! Timurkan lies levelled with the dust!
Send forth, and let Orasming straight proclaim
Zaphimri king—my subjects' rights restored.
[*Exit Morat.*
Now, where is Zamti? where Mandane?—ha!
What means that look of wan despair?

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Oh! dire mischance!
While here I trembled for the great event,
The unrelenting slaves, whose trade is death,
Began their work. Nor piety, nor age,
Could touch their felon-hearts; they seized on Zamti,
And bound him on the wheel. All frantic at the sight,
Mandane plunged a poniard in her heart,
And at her husband's feet expired.
Hamet. Oh! heavens!
My mother!
Zaph. Fatal rashness!—Mirvan, say,
Is Zamti, too, destroyed?
Mir. Smiling in pangs,
We found the good, the venerable man:
Released from anguish, with what strength remained,
He reached the couch where lost Mandane lay;
There threw his mangled limbs; there, clinging to the body,
Prints thousand kisses on her clay-cold lips,
And pours his sad lamentings, in a strain
Might call each pitying angel from the sky,
To sympathize with human woe.
[*The great folding-doors open in the back scene.*
Zaph. And see,
See on that mournful bier he clasps her still;
Still hangs upon each faded feature; still
To her deaf ear complains in bitter anguish.
Heart-piercing sight!
Hamet. Oh! agonizing scene!
[*The corse is brought forward, Zamti lying on the couch, and clasping the dead body.*]
Zamti. Ah! stay, Mandane, stay!—yet once again
Let me behold the day-light of thy eyes!——
Gone, gone—for ever, ever gone! Those orbs,
That ever gently beamed, must dawn no more!
Zaph. Are these our triumphs?—these our promised joys?
Zamti. The music of that voice recalls my soul.
[*Rises from the body, and runs eagerly to embrace Zaphimri; his strength fails him, and he falls at his feet.*]
My prince! my king!
Zaph. Soft, raise him from the ground.
Zamti. Zaphimri!—Hamet too!—Oh! blessed event!
I could not hope such tidings—Thee, my prince—
Thee, too, my son—I thought ye both destroyed.
My slow remains of life cannot endure
These strong vicissitudes of grief and joy.
And there—Oh! Heaven!—see there, there lies Mandane!
Hamet. How fares it now, my father?
Zamti. Lead me to her——
Is that the ever dear, the faithful woman?

Is that my wife?—And is it thus at length,
Thus do I see thee then, Mandane?—Cold,
Alas! death-cold——
Cold is that breast, where virtue from above
Made its delighted sojourn, and those lips
That uttered heavenly truth—pale! pale!—dead,
dead! [*Sinks on the body.*
Pray ye, entomb me with her!
Zaph. Then take, ye Powers, then take your
conquests back;
Zaphimri never can survive——
Zamti. [*Raising himself.*] I charge thee, live:
A base desertion of the public weal
Can ne'er become a king.—Alas! my son——
(By that dear tender name, if once again
Zamti may call thee)—tears will have their way!
Forgive this flood of tenderness: my heart
Melts even now! Thou noble youth, this is
The only interview we e'er shall have.
Zaph. And will ye then, inexorable powers,
Will ye then tear him from my aching heart!
Zamti. The moral duties of the private man
Are grafted in thy soul—Oh! still remember
The mean immutable of happiness,
Or in the vale of life, or on a throne,
Is virtue. Each bad action of a king
Extends beyond his life, and acts again
Its tyranny o'er ages yet unborn.
To error mild, severe to guilt, protect
The helpless innocent; and learn to feel
The best delight of serving human kind.
Be these, my prince, thy arts; be these thy cares,
And live the father of a willing people.
Hamet. Oh! cruel!—see—ah see!—he dies!
—his lips
Tremble in agony—his eye-balls glare!—
A death-like paleness spreads o'er all his face!
Zaph. Is there no help to save so dear a life?
Zamti. It is too late—I die—alas! I die!—
Life harassed out, pursued with barbarous art,
Through every trembling joint—now fails at once!
Zaphimri—oh! farewell!—I shall not see
The glories of thy reign.—Hamet!—my son—
Thou good young man, farewell!—Mandane, yes,
My soul with pleasure takes her flight, that thus
Faithful in death, I leave these cold remains
Near thy dear honoured clay. [*Dies.*
Zaph. And art thou gone,
Thou best of men?—Then must Zaphimri pine
In ever-during grief, since thou art lost;
Since that firm patriot, whose parental care
Should raise, should guide, should animate my
virtues,
Lies there a breathless corse.
Hamet. My liege, forbear:
Live for your people; madness and despair
Belong to woes like mine.
Zaph. Thy woes, indeed,
Are deep, thou pious youth—yes, I will live,
To soften thy afflictions; to assuage
A nation's grief, when such a pair expires.
Come to my heart:—in thee, another Zamti
Shall bless the realm. Now let me hence to hail
My people with the sound of peace; that done,
To these a grateful monument shall rise,
With all sepulchral honour. Frequent, there,
We'll offer incense;—there, each weeping muse
Shall grave the tributary verse;—with tears
Embalm their memories; and teach mankind,
Howe'er oppression stalk the groaning earth,
Yet Heaven, in its own hour, can bring relief;
Can blast the tyrant in his guilty pride,
And prove the Orphan's guardian to the last.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

THE

COUNTESS OF SALISBURY.

BY

HARTSON.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

LORD SALISBURY, *disguised as* ALWIN.
RAYMOND, *lover of lady Salisbury.*
GREY, *his creature.*
MORTON, SIR ARDOLF, LEROCHES, } *friends to Salisbury.*
LORD WILLIAM, *infant son of Salisbury.*

WOMEN.

LADY SALISBURY.
ELEANOR, *her attendant.*

Knights, Peasants, &c.

Scene—Salisbury Castle, and the Country about it.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*An avenue leading to a Gothic castle.*

Enter GREY *and First Knight.*

Grey. A MESSENGER dispatched by lady Salisbury!
Knt. And, in the specious guise he wore, had passed
Unquestioned, had not I, in happy season,
Approached, even as the unwary centinels
Half op'd the gate. By threats o'erawed in part,
In part through hope of favour won, he owned,
At length, by whom employed, whither bent,
And for what purpose.
Grey. Say———
Knt. Straight to repair
To Marlborough; where now, as fame reports,
Our king resides, with all his peers; and there
To seek the lord de Warren; to what end
This paper will, as I suppose, inform you.
I was about to bear it to lord Raymond.
Grey. That care be mine. Henceforward it concerns
Us near. Our vigilance be doubly firm. [*Exit Knt.*
[*Reads.*] 'The countess of Salisbury, to her illus-
'trious friend, the lord de Warren.
'I have lost my husband—Me and my lands
'lord Raymond claims, as by royal grant assigned
'to him. He has banished my train, encompass-
'ed me with his creatures, and holds me a pri-
'soner in my own castle. If the memory of thy
'noble friend be dear to thee, haste and rescue
'the afflicted' 'ELA.'
How near was Raymond's hope, the beauteous hope
He tended with unceasing care; how near
My rising fortunes marred—I like not this:
Her, and her rich domains, he would possess;
Yet in his breast there lives that kind of heart
Withholds him from the path that's nearest. He,
That would be great, must first be bold.
I hate those motleyed characters;
Something, I know not what, 'twixt good and ill,
Yet neither absolute; all good, all ill,
For me—That day, saith he, that happy day,
Which sees the countess mine, shall amply pay

Thy services—a doubtful balance this
Whereon my fortunes hang.—This way he moves;
And, by his gait and gesture, ill at ease———
We must be firm;
My hopes demand it, and the time admits
No weak, no scrupulous delay——

Enter RAYMOND.

Ray. To sue,
But ever without grace to sue—Oh Grey!
I am even weary of the vain pursuit.
Grey. It is, in truth, my lord, an irksome labour.
Ray. But now I cast me at the fair one's feet;
Pleaded my passion with whatever arts
Might best the gentle purpose aid; but she,
Instead of such return as I might hope,
Repaid me with an eye of cold contempt.
Of her late gallant lord she spoke; his merits
In opposition hateful placed to mine.
Urged then with recollection of her wrongs,
Like the loud torrent, with steep winter rains
O'ercharged, in all the loose, ungoverned sway
Of wrath and indignation, she assailed me.
Grey. And did my lord, in this unseemly fashion,
Hear all with equal temper? Waked he not
With such a peal——
Ray. Thou know'st not what it is
To love like me—Long time (for passion now
Had shed o'er all her charms a brighter glow,
That like Jove's daughter most she looked, severe
In youthful beauty) long I lay, o'erawed
And silenced, as by some superior being;
Till, waked by pride, quick from the floor I sprung;
Warned her how she provoked my power;
'Twas great, 'twas now within these walls supreme;
I long had gently wooed her; but that love,
Though patient, would not always brook disdain.
Grey. 'Twas well: and what ensued?
Ray. Silence at first,
Then tears; bright drops, like May-morn dews, that fall
From the sweet blossomed thorn. Back in her chair
She sunk——Oh! had you seen her then, dissolved
In all the soft, the lovely languishment
Of woe; while at her knee, with countenance
Most piteous, stood her beauteous boy, and looked
As if each tear, which from his mother fell,
Would force a passage to his little heart—
I fled; else had I kneeled, and wept myself
As well as she.
Grey. O shame to manhood! suits
Such weakness with our hopes?
Ray. She must, she must,
Yes, Grey, she must be mine—and yet—yet fain
Would I persuade the fair one, not compel.
Grey. Say to what purpose, then, was seized her castle?
When she your suit rejected, then, perforce,
To claim her as the gift of royal favour!
To lord it here so long, and now to falter——
My lord, my lord, the mound is overleapt;
What now forbids but, without further pause,
To crop the rich, the golden fruits within?
Ray. Ungracious is the love reluctance yields;
And cold, cold even as marble, is the maid,
Who comes unwilling to another's arms.
Grey. In brief, would you partake the lady's bed?
Ray. What means the question?
Grey. Look on that, my lord:
Better reluctant come, than not at all.
Ray. How came this to your hand?
Grey. By one whose cares
Of thee demand no trivial recompence.
His wakeful eye it was descried the bearer;
Else had the watch, with all their vigilance,
Proved insufficient.
Ray. My better angel interposed.
Grey. Had this its purposed scope attained—my lord,
Were this but whispered in our Henry's ear—
He gave the royal nod, you say: true, he
Permitted, but thus far; that you should woo
The lady, and, her choice approving, wed;
No more. By us the public ear is told
She hath approved: our artifice hath spread
The rumour; and with some it is received,
That she is now your full espoused consort:
But truth, my lord, long cannot rest concealed;
It will abroad, of that be sure, in spite
Of all our studied wiles.
Ray. What's to be done?
Grey. 'Tis critical, and must be managed nicely——
But see, with Eleanor the countess comes;
And in her hand the young lord William. Here
Her custom is to walk; retire we now;
And thou observe the counsels of a friend. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter LADY SALISBURY, LORD WILLIAM, *and* ELEANOR.

Lady Sal. Talk'st thou of patience? What! the very roof,
That should protect and shelter me, become
My prison? Awed, and threatened, as I am,
By this intruder! Cruel destiny!
Had I not more than common griefs before?
Ele. In evil hour thy hospitable gates
Were opened to receive him.
Lady Sal. Unguarded that I was! But who could then
Foresee the purpose of his coming?
Ele. Who
Can think even yet, that, once repulsed, he e'er
Would thus presume?
Lady Sal. Is there no succour then?

No generous hand to vindicate my wrongs?
Oh Salisbury! Salisbury! Why, if yet thou liv'st——
Fond hope! he lives not, else with speed of thought
Would he repair to his afflicted Ela.
Ele. Why, dearest lady, will you yield you up
A prey to purposed sorrow? Time is fruitful;
And the next hour, perhaps, may bring thee comfort.
Lady Sal. Day after day I have watched the joyless hours:
Night after night, when some fleet courier, sent
Before perchance, or letter, fraught with sweet
Assurance of his safety, might appear;
Five tedious moons have passed since first were told
The dismal tidings; no fleet courier, sent
Before, alas! nor letter, with such sweet
Assurance, yet appears—he's gone! he's lost!
And I shall never, never see him more.
Ele. Ah! suffer not the leaden hand of cold
Despair thus weigh thee down; I yet have hope.
Lady Sal. Away with hope, away! No, no; full loud,
As I remember, and outrageous blew
The storm, that even the solid fabric shook
Of yonder walls; deep-rooted oaks gave way;
Churches and spires were overturned; nor even
The peasant's humble roof escaped that hour.
The fleet, save only one, one luckless ship,
Have all returned; my lord not hath been seen,
Alas! nor ever heard of since the storm.
Ele. Heaven visit her affliction, and bestow
That patience which she needs!
Lady Sal. No, Eleanor; no more shall he
To these deserted walls return. No more
Shall trophies, won by many a gallant deed,
Through the long hall in proud procession move;
No more fair Salisbury's battlements and towers
Re-echo to the approaching trumpet's voice.
Never, Oh! never more shall Ela run,
With throbbing bosom at the well-known sound,
To unlock his helmet, conquest-plumed, to strip
The cuishes from his manly thigh, or snatch
Quick from his breast the plated armour, wont
To oppose my fond embrace—Sweet times, farewell!
Lord Wil. Mother, why do you speak so? you make me sad.
Lady Sal. It is too soon, my child, for thee to know
What sadness is.
Lord Wil. Will not my father come home soon?
Eleanor told me he would: she would not tell a lie.
Lady Sal. No, love.
Lord Wil. Then he will come.
Lady Sal. Sweet innocence! I fear he will not.
Lord Wil. I hope he is not sick.
Lady Sal. Go, lovely prattler, seek thy toys; go, go.
Lord Wil. I will, good mother; but dont be sad, or I shall be so too. [*Exit.*
Lady Sal. Sweet state of childhood! unallayed with cares;
Serene as spring-tide morn, new-welcomed up
With bleat of lamb, with note of woodlark wild.
With riper years come passions turbulent
And rude, a baleful crew, unnumbered as
The forest leaves, that strew the earth in autumn.
When happiness is round thee, when thou art on
The lap of downy ease, when thou art cherished
In the fair bosom of unruffled joy,
Comes a fell hand, dashes thee rudely down,
And leaves thee to despair.
Ele. Cease,
Cease, lady, to afflict thee; Raymond may,
I trust he will, ere long, retire and give
Thee ease again—But hither comes his minion:
Much with his lord he can; and, as he lists,
To purposes of good or ill o'er-rules
His mind: if he accost thee, speak him gently.

Enter GREY.

Grey. As you are fair above all other women,
So may you lend to that I would implore
A gracious ear.
Lady Sal. Without more preface, briefly speak thy suit.
Grey. To love, but ne'er to reap of love the sweet
Returns, is sure the worst of ills.
Lady Sal. And what of that?
Grey. Though love denied, yet pity may do much
To soothe the wound that pity gives. In brief,
Thou much-revered! my suit is in behalf of Raymond.
Lady Sal. Then I will spare us both some cost
Of words: In brief, I love him not, nor pity:
So tell thy lord—I would be private—hence.
Grey. Your words are brief indeed; but of that kind
I dare not, must not bear my lord.
Lady Sal. Must not!
Grey. 'Tis cruel towards the man who loves so fondly.
Lady Sal. Doth he assume the specious name of love?
Love is a bright, a generous quality,
Heaven gave to noble minds; pure and unmixed
With every grosser stuff; a goodly flower,
Shoots up and blossoms in great souls alone.
Grey. The mind, the exalted soul thou nam'st, is his.
Lives there a youth more gentle of condition,
In fair accomplishments more graced, admired?
If beauty sway thy fond regards, if wealth,

I know not in fair England one with him
Can vie.
Lady Sal. Is then the star, the peerless star,
That late was gazed on, quite obscured? What though
He may have set, hath he not left a train
Of glory in the skies? The illustrious name
Of Salisbury yet survives. If wealth—but mark me;
Were he of all the wealth possessed from where
The East Indian bids the sun good-morrow, to where
The Atlantic, in her wide-extended lap,
Receives him setting; could he in each hand
A thousand sceptres place, not all should bribe
Me to his bed. No, Salisbury! thou hast been
The husband of my early love; with thee,
That love was all interred; and when I pluck
It forth again, gape wide that earth wherein
Thou liest, quick snatch me from the light of Heaven,
And swallow me within her lowest prison!
Grey. For pity's sake yet soften; for, Oh! sure
No former love could ever equal his;
No bosom boast the generous flame wherewith
Lord Raymond glows for thee, admired fair!
Lady Sal. Hear this, ye Heavens! and grant me patience—Where's
My people? where the freedom that I late
Was blest with? Wherefore is my palace thronged
With strangers? Why, why are my gates shut up
And fortified against their rightful mistress?
Grey. Madam———
Lady Sal. Is this the love he boasts?
Is this the fair accomplished, this the gentle youth?
Must I recal to mind—Came he not, then,
Even while the memory of my dear loved lord
Was green, while sorrow yet was in my eyes?
Tears! ye will choke me—Came he not even then,
And broke in on my sorrows? Like a spoiler
He came, heaped up the measure of my woes,
Added new anguish to the afflicted heart,
And swelled the current of the widow's tears!
Grey. Madam, were he that spoiler thou proclaim'st,
He need not now thus humbly sue for that
His power, long since, unasked, might have extorted.
Lady Sal. Ha! what art thou, that thus presum'st to threaten?
Extorted!—Hence, thou rude one, bolder even
Than him who calls thee slave.
Grey. Madam, you speak
As though you knew me not.
Lady Sal. I know thee well—
To what concerns lord Raymond I have spoke,
My final purpose fixed:
For thee, I charge thee shun my presence; hence!
And learn the distance that befits thy calling.
Grey. Not ere I speak more fully to the cause—
Nay, lady, look not on me with so stern
An eye, but give me patient hearing—
Lady Sal. No more; I'll hear no more.
Grey. Not hear me!—When next we meet—
I will be heard. [*Exit.*
Lady Sal. What meant he, Eleanor?—I will be heard!
Ele. Alas! I know not: but a soul he hath,
Prompt and alert to acts of desperate thinking.
Hardly thou art beset; O lady, lend
An ear to what thy Eleanor would counsel.
When next he comes, (for that he hath obtained
Of Raymond leave to woo thee to his will,
I know) assume a gentler carriage. Seem
As though you may hereafter to his suit
Incline. Be ruled: necessity oft lends
A sanction to deceit. Demand a pause:
My lord of Salisbury's fate, yet unconfirmed,
Shall add thereto a seeming colour. Chance,
Mean time, that comes or soon or late to all,
To thee may come with unexpected succour.
Lady Sal. Sincerity,
Thou, spotless as the snowy-vested hill!
Forgive me, if, by lawless power constrained,
I turn this once from thy long-trodden path;
It must be so——
Oh, Salisbury! Salisbury! thou lamented shade;
Descend from those pure mansions, where thou sit'st
Exalted: hover o'er me: and, as thou
Wert wont, support me in this hour of trial!
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*Within the castle.*

Enter RAYMOND *and* GREY.

Grey. AWAY, my lord, away with every care!
The conflict's past, and fortune is our own—
Defeated once, again I sought the fair;
I sought her, and prevailed.
Ray. By all the joys, the nameless joys, that on
The precious hour of soft compliance wait,
I will requite thee nobly. Say—for much
My wonder's moved—how hast thou found
Such grace? How wrought this change, thus sudden——thus
Unhoped, from her late bearing?
Grey. Uncertain is the sex—but that imports not.
It now remains, that proof, such proof be sought
Of Salisbury's fate, as, by minute detail
Of circumstances, shall with the lady gain

Prompt credence, Hear what I have devised, if you
Approve——

Enter a Knight.

Knt. My lord, two strangers I have brought,
Within the precincts of the castle found.
Ray. Say'st thou two strangers? of what quality?
Knt. With me they were of speech not over-prompt;
But, by their outward guise, they would seem men
As with some pious purpose charged. Severe
The younger seems, but of excelling form;
And wishes to recruit his wearied limbs
Beneath the friendly covert of this roof.
Ray. Conduct them to our presence. [*Exit Knight.*] I were loth
The weary traveller to dismiss my gates,
Inhospitably rude; yet none I wish,
While we are yet suspended at the nod
Of peevish and uncertain chance, approach
These walls.

Re-enter Knight, with Strangers.

Whence, and what are you?
1*st Stran.* What we are,
These weeds, though we were silent, might unfold.
Alwin I am called, my fellow-traveller
Leroches. Our way was bent for Canterbury,
With purpose of a pious vow: o'ertaken
By weariness from travel, and desire
Of food, we journeyed hitherward, in hope
The lord of these fair turrets, first descried
At close of evening, might befriend our toils.
Ray. Whence have you come?
Alw. From France, not many days.
Ray. Say, what occasion may have called you hither?
Alw. To aid (Heaven prosper long) my country's weal.
Ray. You are a soldier then?
Alw. I have been such;
And to be such was my most dear inclining;
Smit with the love, even from my greenest youth,
Of honest arms. Some share of fame I too
Achieved—But ill the soldier it becomes
To trumpet his own praises.
Ray. Cease not so.
Though in the school of war untutored, much
It pleaseth me to hear the brave man's labours.
Alw. None but have heard how some time since was sent,
To claim of Lewis certain lands usurped,
A puissant force———
Ray. Were you therein employed?
Alw. Beneath the royal banner I enrolled,
As was my bent, in quest of fame.
Ray. Indeed!
Lord Salisbury then, perchance, of thee was known?
Alw. I knew him well; our liege's near ally,
And second to duke Richard in command.
Fast by his side was my allotted post
Upon the marshalled field: by him I fought,
For him had died.
Ray. Of him fame loudly speaks,
That in those wars he was a gallant man.
Alw. He was not wont, while others bravely fought,
To look inactive on.
Ler. A foe like him
France never knew, of all that warrior host,
Which, like an inundation, England poured
On her affrighted shores—
Ray. But what
Have proved his latter fortunes I should wish
To learn—Say, courteous stranger, if thou can'st,
Of this renowned lord: a rumour hath
Long since prevailed, that he on Gallia's coast
Was wrecked with all his crew.
Alw. What cause there was
Of such report, alas! these eyes have seen;
How true in part it is, too sure this tongue
Can testify.
Ray. I pray you, let us hear.
Alw. O'ercharged with human prey, fell war had ceased
To walk his wasteful round; well pleased we turn
Us from the blood-stained field; exulting each
With some rich spoil, trophies by valiant dint
Of arms achieved. Forthwith the eager host
Embark.
And now the chalky cliffs on Albion's coast
To our straining view appeared; the exulting crew
With peals redoubled greet the well known shore—
Ill-fated men! in vain the anxious dame
Oft mounts the high-raised tower, thence earnest looks
Haply if her wished-for lord may come; in vain
The prattling boy oft asks her of his sire,
That never, never shall return.
Ray. Proceed,
Good stranger——what was the event?
Alw. Anon
The winds began to shift; up rose a storm,
And heaved the bosom of the troubled deep:
On the swoln billows sits enthroned grim Death,
And shakes his fatal dart.—The fleet, which late
In such fair order sailed, is now dispersed.
Before the wind we drove, left to the mercy
Of the wild waves, and all-disposing Heaven—
Oh my loved friends! associates of my toils!
Rescued in vain from war's wide wasteful arm,
Here end your labours! here, sweet life forsakes you!
For me, a slender plank, next to the hand
Of some good angel, bore me to the shore.
Of full five hundred gallant lives, which late

Embarked, not one that fatal hour survived—
Ray. Save only thee?
Alw. Save only me.
Ray. Speak now, secure, for nearly it concerns
My quiet—speak—was Salisbury of your crew?
Alw. Alas! too sure.
Ray. Enough—Thy courtesy
Of us may well, and shall be well requited.
Of this our friend accept mean time his prompt
Regards: anon we shall be glad to hold
Some farther converse with you.
[*Exit Alw. Ler. and Knt.*
Grey. Of this stranger
What thinks my lord?
Ray. As of an angel, sent
To waft me on his wings strait to the summit
Of all my wishes—With what a gallant grace
He bears him!—Much I wish to hear him speak
Again—to hear the battles he has fought,
And all the story of his life and fortunes.
Grey. That we shall learn hereafter: but 'tis meet
That he to lady Salisbury first unfold
The sum of what he here reported.
Ray. Methinks
I now behold her, like some full-blown flower,
The fairest of the garden, late o'ercharged
With showers, her head declining sad, whilst he
Recounts the story of her Salisbury's fate.
Would she were mine without a tear;
Without a sigh.—But she must weep; she must;
Thereon my all depends—Oh wayward sorrow!
That wounds—yet, wounding, heals the lover.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Changes to an apartment.* LADY SALISBURY *reclining on a couch.*

Enter ELEANOR.

Ele. Grief, that of time's fixed periods for repose
Takes small account, hath lulled her wearied senses—
Where'er thou dwell'st, Oh Peace! with azure eyes
Serene; or if in stately-structured dome,
Or thatched-roofed cottage low, or in cool grot
By fountain clear thou sit'st, or if perchance
Along the silver brook's green liveried verge
Reclined, approach, thou rosy-dimpled fair!
Leave thy sweet haunts awhile; and with that balm
Which soothes the woe-struck heart, await her slumbers.
The hour approaches, when, as is her custom,
She seeks the hallowed shrine, and pious wakes
The voice of pure devotion to high heaven:
I'll thither, and expect her—but she wakes——
How fares the mistress of my best regards?
Proved her slumbers sweet as were my wishes?
Lady Sal. Sweet, sweet, my Eleanor; so sweet, oh! would
I never had waked. I dreamt, as wont on him
To dream, that I beheld his gracious form,
My bosom's lord: a while he stood, and seemed
On me to smile; then flew to my embraces——
Ah fleeting ecstacy!—'twas but a dream.

Enter a Knight.

Knt. Thy favour, lady; I am charged with news,
That much imports thy hearing: summon up
Thy powers; two strangers late have come, of whom
One brings assured tidings of thy lord.
Lady Sal.——My lord——what——speak—
Knt. He saith he knew my lord
Of Salisbury well; that he was of his crew;
And with that peer embarked from France.
Lady Sal.—But—well—from France.——
Knt. Lady, all must have
Their sorrows. Strait uprose a mighty tempest,
Dispersed the fleet o'er all the seas——
The storm—the fatal wreck—of all
The stranger gives most circumstantial proof.
Ele. Alas the tidings!—Dearest lady, give
Thy sorrows vent; thy bosom's overfraught,
And will find ease by letting loose its woes.
Lady Sal.——Well, well——
Then he is lost, and all, all is despair.
Though languid, yet was hope not quite extinct—
Where, where's the stranger? Seek him, haste, that I
May hear him fully speak of all. Methinks
[*Exit Knt.*
'Twill be a desperate sort of soothing; to hang
Upon each sound, catch every circumstance
Of the sad story; and wring my aching heart,
Till I am even surfeited with sorrow.
Ele. Behold! the stranger comes——

Enter ALWIN.

Lady Sal. Bear, bear me up, good Heaven!
That I may give full measure to my sorrow.
Alw. Thy angel hover o'er thee, and support thee. [*In an under voice.*
Lady Sal. The dead ere now
Have burst the prisons of the close-pent grave,
And apparitions, strange of faith, appeared;
Perhaps thou too art but a shadow; let
Me grasp thee, for, as I have life, I think——
It is, it is my Salisbury! O my lord!
Lord Sal. My bosom's joy!
Lady Sal. And dost thou live indeed?
Amazing Providence! He does! he does!
Look! look! behold him, Eleanor! behold
The gracious form! The vision was not vain.
[*Ele. goes aside.*
Lord Sal.—And art thou, art thou then—
Lady Sal. O my full bosom!
Lord Sal. The same, by time or circumstance unchanged?

Lady Sal. Unhoped reverse! Hence, hence all former woes—
My lord! my life! hence, hence, be swallowed up
All griefs, and lost in this most blisful hour.
Lord Sal. Thou art, I see, thou art the same, thou must—
Thou hast not yielded to another lord?
Lady Sal. Another lord! and could you, did you think
'Twas so?
Lord Sal. Thus spoke loud rumour on my way:
Indeed, I scarce could think it.
Lady Sal. Oh! 'twas foul!
Indeed thou should'st not think it——
Lord Sal. Ever dear!
No more; my soul is satisfied, and thinks
Of nothing now but happiness and thee.
Lady Sal. Say, then, thou wanderer—Oh! I have much
Of thee to ask, thou much to hear: how is't
I see thee, see thee thus? Where hast thou been?
What secret region hath so long detained thee?
Lord Sal. O thou! whose image, ever in my view,
Sustained me, angel-like, against the rough
And rapid current of adversity;
Should I recount the story of my fortunes,
Each circumstance beginning from that day
We parted, to this hour, thine ear would be
Fatigued; the stars, ere I had ended, cease
To twinkle; and the morning's sun break in
Upon the unfinished tale; suffice it thee
To know the sum:
For England we embarked, when, black and foul,
A tempest rising, quick upturned the seas,
And cast me forth upon a hostile shore.
Why need I tell thee, love, how, in disguise,
On foot, alone, I've toiled my weary way,
Through dreary vale, o'er mountain wild; my bed
Oft of the blasted heath, whilst o'er my limbs
Damp night hath shaken her cold, dewy wings,
And the chill northern gale hath spent his breath
On my defenceless head?
Through what variety of strange events
I've come, heaven-guided, to behold, once more,
My wife? But, ah! my son! our only hope!
My boy! what, what of him?
Lady Sal. Dear to these eyes
As is the new-born light of heaven! he lives;
Is well—But say, my lord, what would thy coming,
Thus unattended, thus disguised?
Lord Sal. How I escaped from hard captivity,
And Gallia's coast, more leisure shall inform you.
My friend, sir Ardolph, had but just embraced me,
(The first glad transports of our meeting o'er)
When, with an honest tear, the good old man
In brief disclosed what fame had now reported;
That thou wert soon, or hadst, ere this, espoused
Earl Hubert's nephew, and sole purposed heir.
Lady Sal. Oh, most unhallowed, thus to abuse
My unattainted love! And could my lord——
Lord Sal. Yet hear me. Strait I grasped my sword;
And, single as I was, had sallied forth,
Had not my friend's sage counsels interposed.
By Ardolph swayed, I veiled me as thou seest;
And, with a sharer in the dark intent,
Set forward on my way for Salisbury castle:
A simple hind's low cottage, not far hence,
Received us. Here, fast by the greenwood side,
We lodged; resolved, ourselves unknown, to prove
What doubtful rumour only had proclaimed.
With this intent, at dusk of evening we
Forsook the cot.
Lady Sal. There needs no more: Heaven saw
Me, and was touched with pity. What a change
This hour! Sequestered as I was, even like
The votarist; perhaps the destined prey
Of rude desire.
Lord Sal. O for to-morrow's slow returning night!
Lady Sal. Say, what of that, my lord?
Lord Sal. Revenge, revenge—
I'll tell thee: Soon as the dark usurping night
Shall chace to-morrow's sun adown the skies,
Know, Ardolph, with a chosen troop of friends,
To that same cottage, armed, shall come——

Enter ELEANOR.

Ele. My lord, I hear the approach of hasty steps.
Lord Sal. Farewell, my best:
Nor peace nor sleep shall visit me, till I
Have given thee freedom, and revenged our wrongs.

Enter Knight.

Knt. Lord Raymond, sir, forthwith expects your coming.
Lord Sal. I will attend him. Lady, fain would I
Have told thee less ungracious things: but all
Have their appointed trials. Learn to bear;
Convinced, the hand of Heaven, when it inflicts,
Prepares us oft for some superior good.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Within the castle.*

Enter RAYMOND *and* GREY.

Ray. I see nor cause my joys to check; nor boast
As yet securely.
Grey. Think, that Hope, the young,
The merry-minded fair, exalts us oft,
To make our fall the greater.
Ray. Why this cold,
This prudent maxim?
Grey. Mark the wary falcon:
Forward he shoots his piercing eye, and kens
The quarry from afar; like his be thine.
Perhaps, my lord, mine are but nicer fears,
Waked in a heart o'er anxious of thy welfare:
Yet hath the younger of those strangers raised
In me suspicion of alarming hue,
Lest, underneath this honest guise, there lurk
Some subtle mischief. Lady Salisbury saw him:
Their conference, as 'twas long, so was it held
In secret—would we had been present.
Ray. Granting
Our presence had been seemly—wherefore spoke
You not this counsel ere they met?
Grey. I saw not then the danger.
His honest carriage, and the recent change
Within her mind, had lulled each nicer fear.
Ray. 'Till now unmoved, say what hath waked suspicion?
Grey. I know not well. Would she were firmly thine,
Beyond the reach and grasp of wayward fortune.
The knight, whose office was to introduce
Him to the countess, he dismissed, ere they
Approached the apartment.
Ray. Indeed!
Grey. This too: Is it not strange, though night, and this
Thy proffered roof, invited his sojourn,
He would not wait the approach of morning?
Ray. Are they gone?
Grey. Amid the unguarded joy
Which held us, they escaped, unheeded.

Enter Second Knight.

Knt. My lord,
Two strangers, it is said, in palmers' weeds
Attired, have lodged since morning in a hut;
You may have marked it, in the darksome glen,
Near to the forest of wild oaks, just where
The stream white rushes down the shelving cliff.
Ray. Since morning, say'st thou?
Knt. Further I have learned:
Their guise, as doth appear from certain words
O'erheard, is borrowed with design to mask
Some secret purpose. [*Exit.*
Grey. It must be so:
Their close-concerted arts have foiled our caution.
Ray. They scarce have measured half the precincts yet;
Send forth my knights, we will pursue them.
Grey. No: One way there is, and only one—
But hence;
I hear the countess——She loves lord William well:
And much, much will a pious mother, sure,
To save an only son. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter LADY SALISBURY *and* ELEANORA.

Lady Sal. In spite of this event, this blest event,
That hath restored the lord of this fond bosom,
Yet is my mind with doubts and fears disturbed;
With images and wild conceits, of form
Unsightly; such as hover oft in dreams
About the curtains of the sick.——Alas!
Whilst others joy within the friendly roof,
Of night regardless, and the storm that beats
Without, he struggles hard; or hies, at best,
To the dark shelter of the dripping wood.
Besides, what unknown perils may assail him,
Unaided thus against whatever ill.
Would he had waited the return of morn!
Ele. The night is dark indeed, the tempest high;
But hear me, lady, hear a pious lesson,
Which thy own lips to me have oft repeated:
There is a power unseen, whose charge it is,
With ever wakeful eye, to watch the good;
And peaceful ever is that breast, which trusts
In his angelic guard.—The hand
Of Heaven, that hitherto hath been his shield,
Will minister safe convoy to his steps,
Though night and darkness shed their thickest gloom.
Lady Sal. Misdeem not of my fears; or think I speak,
As over diffident of that same power
Thou namest, whose all-surveying eye wakes ever;
Clear, unobstructed, either when the sun
Shrowds in night's shadowy veil, or when at noon
He shines revealed on his meridian throne.
But where's the bosom throbs not, if it hopes?
Hope ever is attended with a train
Of wakeful doubts; and where the sweet nymph harbours,
There flutters also her pale sister, Fear.———
But hence, as was our purpose, to the shrine;
Where, as is meet, for my dear lord restored,
I will, with grateful adoration———

Enter LORD WILLIAM.

Lord Wil. Mother, I fain would know that stranger, who he is, that just now met me.
Lady Sal. And wherefore wouldst thou know him, love?

Lord Wil. Gentle he was, and mild; not like those grim-faced ones I see here every day: and such kind things he did, as make me love him dearly.

Lady Sal. Say, what were they?

Lord Wil. He kissed me, stroked my head, and patted me upon the cheek, and said——

Lady Sal. What said he, sweet?

Lord Wil. He said, 'Heaven bless thy beauteous head, sweet boy.'

Enter GREY.

Grey. Permit me, honoured dame; I have a word
Or two, that claims thine ear.

Lady Sal. Then but a word;
My present cares ill brook long interruption.

Grey. Behold the blossom of the spring, how fair!
Yet in his velvet bosom lurks the worm,
And hourly wastes him of his choicest sweets;
Nor less a foe is slow consuming grief
To beauty.——
You may remember, when we last conferred,
The gracious purport of your words to what
Concerned lord Raymond, when you taught his suit
To hope a prosperous issue; thus by me he speaks:
In the recesses of the hallowed shrine,
Where with him stands the sable vested priest,
He waits thy coming; there, with pious vows
Exchanged, even now to consecrate thee his.—
May every rose-lipped son of light look down,
And smile propitious on the joyful hour!

Lady Sal. Is this a season meet for such a theme?

Grey. For gracious acts all seasons should be meet;
Heaven shews the bright example; ever prompt
To incline, when virtue lifts her suppliant eye.
But say that for the present he forbore
His earnest suit, say, shall to-morrow make
Him happy? or to-morrow's night, perchance?
Or—what shall be the bright succeeding day?

Lady Sal. I know not; nor will I submit me or
To promised league or tie; no, though thou shouldst plead
Even with an angel's tongue.

Grey. You will not, lady!——
Know, then, this night, this hour must make thee his.

Lady Sal. This night! this hour!——Who'll make me his this hour?

Grey. A power, my lady, thou shalt learn to fear;
Force, force superior, that, with giant hand,
Plucks even the monarch from his throne—disrobes
The virgin of her honour; while distress,
With streaming eyes and loose dishevelled hair,
Holds forth her supplicating hands in vain.

Lady Sal. I know the monster thou wouldst fright me with;
But I despise his power.—Hast thou ne'er heard?
Learn, then, of me a truth, a golden truth,
Graved on the registers of hoary time:
Virtue, with her own native strength upheld,
Can brave the shock of ruffian force, unmoved
As is the rock, whose firm-set base not all
The tumult of the western surge can shake,
Though the fierce winds uplift him to the stars.

Grey. This is a truth, indeed, may hold a place
On fancy's tinsel page:—What will avail
Thy virtue's boasted powers, when thou shalt see,
Torn from thy feeble arms, all thou holdest dear?
Yes, lady, thy lord William, thy loved son!

Lady Sal. Ha!—Save him, Heaven! He dare not sure——and yet——

Grey. Think, lady, think upon thy son.

Lady Sal. Protect
Him, O ye powers celestial!——angels watch
His steps, and hover round his harmless head!

Grey. Say, will you to the altar, lady?

Lady Sal. Sooner to my grave.

Grey. Thy obstinacy on his head—Who waits?

Enter a Ruffian.

Lady Sal. What wouldst thou here? Hence, execrable wretch!
Thou makest my blood run cold.

Lord Wil. Oh, mother, I am frightened.

Lady Sal. Dearest lamb!——
Hast thou no terrors for thyself?—Oh, Salisbury!
Hast thou no fears?—Oh, I could tell thee what,
Like thunder, would appal thy hearing, shrink
Up every nerve within thy blasted frame,
And make thee nothing.——Fear not, love.

Grey. Think not
With empty sounds to shake our purpose; say,
Will you comply?

Lady Sal. My little innocent!
Thou darest not, fell as is thy nature—My love!
My life!

Grey. Convey lord William hence.

Lord Wil. Oh, save me, mother, save me!

Lady Sal. Forbear your impious hands! forbear!

Grey. Or to the altar, or, by all therein,
I swear, this moment wrests him from thy view.

Lady Sal. Inhuman that thou art, can nothing move
Thee?——Oh! those little harmless looks would preach
Even to the hungry lion, make him pause,
And turn his rage to pity.

Grey. Nay, madam——

Lady Sal. Forbear, and I will go—Whither?
Distraction! I will rouse
The castle.——Help!—My cries shall tear the roofs!
Help, help, oh, help!—the mother and the son!

Grey. Your cries are vain.——

Enter LORD SALISBURY.

Lord Sal. Hold!—What is it ye do?
Grey. He here again!
Lord Sal. Speak, lady! would these men have wronged thee?
Pale fear is on thy cheek!
[*Ele. removes Lord Wil.—Exeunt Grey and Ruf.*
Lady Sal. Cold horror hath o'ercome me.
Lord Sal. Ever loved!
Sure thou wert sore distressed! I heard thee cry.
Lady Sal. Ah, sore distressed indeed! the hand of peril
Was on me; violence and murder stared
Me full in all their hideous forms!
Lord Sal. Gracious powers! my fear, my fear, new waked;
For thee it was, as Heaven decreed, that urged
Me back, and brought me to thy timely rescue.
Lady Sal. 'Twas Heaven, indeed, that brought thee hither now!
Yet I have wondrous fears—thou art but one,
Surrounded by a legion of those fiends.

Enter RAYMOND, GREY, *and armed Knights.*

Ray. [*As he enters.*] Where is the audacious man, that hath presumed
To question with such bold intrusion?
Lord Sal. If him you mean,
Who took the part of feeble innocence
Against the ruffian's arm—he's here.
Ray. Which of you, slaves, have suffered him to enter?
Knt. My lord, he bade us to unbar the gates,
Driven by the tempest, as he said, to seek
The proffered shelter he had late declined;
Pardon, if, deeming him your honoured guest,
We answered him with prompt compliance.
Ray. Say, what dark purpose is it hath brought thee hither?
Confess thee true, or, by the blessed saints,
Thou shalt have cause to mourn the hour which moved
Thee, daring as thou art, to approach our castle.
Lord Sal. To other regions, other climes, with threats
Like these, where proud oppression lords it: here
The free-born subject knows not what it is
To be in awe of arbitrary power.
Ray. I will know what thou art.
Lord Sal. Even what thou seest
Am I; a man not prompt to offer wrong,
Yet of that frame, I brook not to behold
A noble lady made the prey of ruffians.
Ray. Intruder, bold as thou art officious, wherefore
Shouldst thou concern thee in this lady's cause?
Lord Sal. The cause of innocence should be the cause
Of all. Confess thee, lord! was it nobly done,
To let those bold, those rude assailants loose,
And give a sanction to such foul proceedings?
Ray. Pilgrim, hast thou forgot thee? Who am I?
Lord Sal. Who art thou! Ask, ask thy deeds,
And they will answer. The breath of fame hath told
How base they have been; they are gone abroad,
And the pure air is tainted with their foulness.
Ray. Presuming slave! whoe'er thou art, for thy
Unlicenced bearing dearly shalt thou answer.
Hence with the bold defamer; bind him fast;
Be instant death his lot, should he resist——
Seize him, I say!
Lady Sal. Oh! spare him, spare——
Lord Sal. Out, servile ministers!
Ye know not who it is ye would attempt—
Oppressive lord! whom nor the sacred bond
Of justice, nor of hospitality
Controls, regard me! while with sight
More dire than e'er of Gorgon feigned, I strike thee——
Now, Raymond, if thou hast of noble fire
One spark within thee, draw thy sword; come on,
And meet my arm; wake all that's man within thee.
Come on—— [*Flings off his disguise.*
'Tis Salisbury, Salisbury calls thee to the strife.
Lady Sal. Heaven shield my dearest lord!
Ray. Salisbury! then what am I!——
Lord Sal. Vengeance at length is armed; thy fate cries out,
And honour, injured honour, claims aloud
Her victim.
Ray. Secure thou seem'st of fate, but fall who will
A victim, let the sword—— [*Drawing.*
Grey. What would you do?——
[*Aside, holding his arm.*
Look not to know him, all may yet be well—
Be not abused, my lord: this is a plot,
Devised with purpose to effect thy ruin.
Lord Sal. Ha! what dost say?
Grey. Believe him not, my lord. He! he lord Salisbury!
'Tis all a trick, an artful cheat, and he
A liar traced—
Lord Sal. Nay then my sword——
Dishonest knights!
[*Going to attack Raymond, he is disarmed.*
Lady Sal. Now, by these tears, do him no violence!
He is, he is my husband.
Grey. Regard her not:
He hath conspired against thee, and demands
The hand of justice.
Lord Sal. Will ye not ope, ye Heavens, and instant send
Your thunder to my aid? Unhand me, villains!
Or, by the powers of vengeance, I will dash
You piece-meal!

Ray. Bear the traitor hence, and bind
His stubborn arms: bestow the lady safe
Within her chamber.
Lady Sal. I will not part my husband—Hold your hands—
They overpower me——barbarous, barbarous men!
Lord Sal. Ruffians, forbear your more than impious hands!
Lady Sal. Yet hear me, Raymond—by these streaming eyes,
Oh! hear me yet—
Ray. Away—
Lord Sal. Slaves! murderers!
[*They are forced off severally.*
Ray. Away with him, away! honour is lost,
And shame must henceforth be my only portion.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter RAYMOND *and* GREY.

Grey. My lord, you waste the precious hours in cold
Irresolute delays: nor circumstance
Nor time admit of long deliberation.
Ray. Would I had never seen this fatal mansion!
Grey. A sorry wish, my lord. Behold the fierce,
The lordly ranger of the desert wild;
No sluggish fear he knows; he pauses not,
Nor looks behind, but onward speeds him till
He gripes the trembling prey: be ever thus
The youth, whom thirst of love and beauty fires.
Ray. Away; call forth my train—nay, murmur not:
Command that, ere the lark proclaim the morn,
They hold them each prepared. Here I will rest,
If rest I can, this night; to-morrow's sun
Shall see me fled for ever from these walls.
Grey. Go———I detain thee not.
Summon thy train, mount the swift steed, away;
The gates shall open to thy flight. But know,
That shame and scorn shall follow at thy heels.
Yet worse; the insulted baron next pursues thee:
Nor rocks, nor mountains, nor opposing seas
Shall stay him; but with more than mortal rage
He shall assail thee.
Ray. Are there no other means?
Grey. None.
Ray. No other way but murder? Horrid thought!
Oh! Grey, if e'er the dagger's drawn, I feel
Such perturbation here! what then, oh what
Shall prove my portion when 'tis steeped in blood?
The drops can from the point be wiped away,
But never from the mind,
Grey. Lift, lift thine eye,
And let it gaze upon the bright reward.
Riches and honours grace the swelling act,
While beauty, like the ruby-crowned morn,
When first she appears upon the mountain top,
Comes smiling on to meet you. These are objects,
My lord, would irritate the palsied arm
Itself of fear; excite the lagging blood,
And spur it on to acts of noble daring.
Ray. What would you do? Think—Salisbury is a name
Of all beloved, of more than vulgar sway
Throughout the land; a deed, unauthorised
As this, shall never escape the arm of justice.
Grey. Such wary counsels shall our steps o'errule,
As may deride suspicion—One there is,
A knight among thy vassal train, perhaps
Unnoted: soft of speech he is, and fair;
But of a heart that mocks at human feelings:
Him I have sounded with reserve; and find
Him not unapt to this our secret purpose.
But say, what recompence, what high reward
Awaits the man, whose arm for thee enacts
Such signal service?
Ray. Half my fortunes——all
Would I on him bestow, whose prosperous arts
Should make the fair one mine.
Grey. She shall be thine.
Ray. But say, my friend—what tale, what rare device
Should fruitful art explore, that might amuse
Her just suspicions?
Grey. Innocence! the mask
Of innocence, and counterfeited sorrow——

Enter ELEANOR.

Ele. If beauty in distress, if dignity,
Now sinking into ruin, can assail
Thy pity, come, oh! come, and weep to see——
Grey. The countess, I suppose.
Ele. My lord, my lord,
'Twould melt the savage into human softness,
And make him howl forth pity, to behold her—
Oh! did you see her, pale, disordered as
She runs, now calling wildly on her lord,
Again upon her son, again on thee!
Sometimes, alas! she beats her beauteous bosom;
Anon, in frantic mood, tears from her head
The silken hairs, which fall in heaps unheeded;
Wrings her white hands, and weeps and raves by turns,
Till nature, spent and wearied, gives her pause

Ray. Away: we will speak comfort to her sorrows. [*Exit Eleanor.*
Wretch that I am! But I will yield them up;
Son, husband——all I will resign, if so
I may appease her phrenzy.
[*Going, is detained by Grey.*
Grey. Be not rash.
Short is the date of every stronger passion;
Unstayed the mind of woman; by a breath
Oft agitated, by a breath composed——
Yield them, my lord! it would be madness, ruin.
Ray. Which ever way I turn, it is destruction.
Grey. O'ercast with fear, thine eyes take nothing in
But fancies of the sickliest hue——For shame!
Rouse, rouse, my noble lord; awake, shake off
This weakness. Pleasure must be wooed with toil.
Go to her, solace her; if that should fail,
Permit her, as by stealth, to visit Salisbury;
At sight of him this tumult shall subside.
Ray. With love and pity I am torn. In vain
I strive; too far I am advanced in error.
Oh! will no hand disclose a path, whereby
I may return? Accursed be thou, myself;
And doubly be accursed that fatal hour
I turned mine ear to thy destructive counsels!
[*Goes out in great agitation.*
Grey. [*Alone.*] My hopes begin to totter.
If he resign them, Salisbury is appeased,
And he retires: what then becomes of Grey?
On me, on me, of course, the tempest falls.
That must not be—he goes to see her now—
Who knows what new-sprung hope may follow thence?
There is a charm in soft distress, that works
Upon the soul like magic; causing love
Oft times, as oft exciting loose desire——
It is most apt. I will, before he goes
To her, explore each access to his heart;
Attack each avenue that leads to virtue;
Try every winning art that may assist
The loose contagion: should he seize her beauties,
Farewell remorse; then dies the injured husband. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Opens and discovers* LORD SALISBURY *on the ground, in chains.*

Enter LEROCHES.

Ler. Alas! on the cold ground! I fear his wrongs
Have made him mad; I heard him rage—My lord—
Rise, rise, my lord, and speak to thy Leroches.
Lord Sal. —Thou art unkind.
Ler. Oh! would to Heaven that I could ease thy troubles!
Lord Sal. I had in sweet oblivion lost myself
And every care; why hast thou called me back
To hated recollection?—O! my wrongs,
My wrongs! they now come rushing o'er my head—
Again, again, they wake me into madness.
Ler. Thy wrongs shall be revenged.
Lord Sal. Torn from them both!
——Let me not think.
Ler. Think on our friends, my lord:
Perhaps, even now, they are at hand; and soon
Will thunder at the gates.
Lord Sal. Is it possible?
Or do my eyes but false persuade me to it?—
In trammels, and within my walls! beneath
That roof where I am sole invested lord!—
Ler. Look, behold.
Lord Sal. I see thou art dishonoured.
Ler. 'Tis the will
Of Heaven, and I submit me to my fortunes.
Lord Sal. How cam'st thou hither?
Ler. By command, as I
Suppose, of—but I will not name him.
Lord Sal. Blasts
Upon him!—Didst thou see my wife?
Ler. No, my lord.
Lord Sal. Nor my son?
Ler. My lord, I saw not either.
Lord Sal. Nor of either heard?
Ler. No, my good lord;—I trust that they are safe.
Lord Sal. Hear me, sweet Heaven! ye throned powers above,
Dread arbiters of mortal doings, hear—
Dry not instant up the springs of life,
But grant me measure of revenge. Unbind,
For pity, these dishonoured limbs unbind,
And give this monster to my willing arm:
If I not firmly gripe, if I not tear
With more than savage force his hated form—

Enter a Knight.

Traitor!
What hast thou done? Bring forth my honoured dame—
Haste, bring her instant; give her to my arms,
Uninjured, undefiled, or, by the souls
Of the most holy and unspotted saints——
Spare me, good Heaven—I am, I am to blame.
Imports thy coming aught with me?
Knt. Behold
In me thy better angel, come to warn
Thee of unguarded danger—Oh! my lord,
My lord! beware of horrid treachery—
Whatever knight thou not'st, that, traitor-like,
Approacheth thee with smiles; that, with the charm
Of honeyed speech, would practice on thy hearing,
Of him beware—They seek thy ruin; chance
Betrayed their purpose; I was touched with pity.
[*Going.*
Lord Sal. Nay, go not yet.
Knt. Suspicion's on the watch;
My thoughts are scarce my own.

Lord Sal. It is for guilt,
Not conscious honesty, to taste of fear.
Knt. Know then, my lord, though strict necessity
Enrolls me in the list of Raymond's train,
Yet doth my soul abhor the unhallowed service.
Lord Sal. Be thou but faithful, and discover all
Thou know'st, so shalt thou thrive in Salibury's favour.
Knt. Fear not my faith. But shall lord Salisbury prove
A friend indeed? For I shall need thy arm
And interest both against so great a foe.
Lord Sal. Now by my honour, ever yet held dear,
I will protect thee, 'gainst whatever foe.
Knt. Morton desires but this—Know then, that late
As by the western porch I stood, my ear
Was met by certain voices: straight I turned;
And through the crevice of the adjoining door
Was known that same insidious knight and Grey,
In low, but earnest converse. Thee they named;
And I could hear the latter, whilst he said,
'A dagger is the best. With honest smiles,
'And fair-instructed speech you must essay him.
'Thy peace and fortunes on this feat depend.'
Lord Sal. I thank thee for this warning; and ere long
Shall recompense thy love.
Mor. Had I the power
To serve thee, as the will, thou should'st not wear
Those marks of shame—But oh! the unhappy countess!
Lord Sal. What, what of her?
Mor. Alas! to think the pangs
She feels this moment, torn as she hath been,
By rude barbarians, from her lord and son.
Lord Sal. But is she safe? Hath not dishonour reached her?
Mor. Oh may she never know dishonour!—Yet Lord Raymond—
Lord Sal. Perish the detested name
For ever! for it makes my blood outcourse
The wholesome speed of nature.
Mor. It is true,
He holds her in his power—
Lord Sal. He does, he does:
And I do live to know it!
Mor. But I trust
He will not use that power—Farewell, my lord;
I will away, and gather all I can
Of their condition.
Lord Sal. Thou shalt win my love.
See, see my wife, oh! see her if thou can'st:
Speak comfort to her. Say, the only pangs I feel,
Are for her safety. Bid her hope for timely aid;
But to remember still, the virtuous mind
Will welcome death itself before dishonour.
Mor. To see her, is a task I fear will foil
My utmost; but no art shall be untried.
[*Exit Mor.*
Lord Sal. Is there no way to freedom?—Oh my friends!
My friends! Haste, Ardolf, haste to my revenge!
Ler. Thy fierce impatience, thy untoward will,
It is, my lord, that hath betrayed our safeties.
To Ardolf deaf, thou would'st not wait his succours;
Deaf, too, to me, thou would'st approach the castle.
Lord Sal. Fear not: this stranger, like Heaven's brighter star,
Hath risen propitious—Heavens! but what of that?
My wife!—perhaps, even now within the gripe
Of fell incontinence she struggles—Beware
That thought—down, down, or I shall rage to madness.
Ler. My lord, he would not—
Lord Sal. Hark!—
Ler. He would not, dare not, sure: or, if he dare,
Her inborn dignity, her virtue—
Lord Sal. Peace!—
Lady Sal. Hold off your brutal hands!
[*From without.*
Lord Sal. 'Tis she! 'tis she!
The slave assails her—Let me forth—
Slaves! murderers! instant let me forth, or I—
Lady Sal. Hast thou no touch of pity?
Lord Sal. Horror! horror!
Out hair! out by the roots! nor let a grain
Be left to tell there grew such honours there.
Lady Sal. O, my lord! my lord!—
Lord Sal. By Heaven I will not be restrained—
[*Ler. strives to stay him.*
Nor all your bolts, nor barriers, all the powers
Of hell united shall withhold me from her—
Ler. Preserve him, Heaven! I fear
Some act of horrid import—Oh! she comes!
Wild, wild as the rough ocean vexed with storms.
[*Bursts forth.*

Enter LADY SALISBURY, ELEANOR, *and* MORTON,

Lady Sal. I will have vengeance. Such an outrage—No,
I will not weep. They think I have no means:
'Tis false: I will resume a spirit.
Ele. Alas, alas!
Lady Sal. I had a son: sweet William!—thou hast heard
Him prattle; there was music on his tongue.
Ele. Can Heaven behold such crimes, and not awake
Its thunders?
Lady Sal. Weep'st thou? I can weep myself;
I have some cause——He is my husband—who
Will part us?—Cold, cold, cold. The rains beat sore,
And the winds make a noise; 'tis a rough night;
No little star to guide his darkling steps——
The heavens do rain down pity for me.
Ele. Rave
Not thus, dear lady; oh! be comforted.
Lady Sal. Yes, yes: I know; these trifles have disturbed me,

The bird is rifled.
Poor flutterer! oh! it was naught to spoil
Her of her little hope——Did'st thou not see
Her valiant mate, how fierce he shook his plumes,
And pecked at them? Did he not?—He had saved
His mistress from the spoilers, but they snared him.
Lord Sal. [*Entering.*] Where is the slave? I will not brook delay.
Lady Sal. He's come! he's come——Now, ruffians, I have found
Him, we will die together ere you part us!
Lord Sal. Hell! what are your blackest horrors to this?
Lady Sal. We will have justice,—bury Grey alive.
Lord Sal. She's lost!
Lady Sal. Say you!—Put Raymond to the torture.
Lord Sal. I will tear him joint by joint.
Lady Sal. But they will part us——
They come—You shall not—no; no power on earth
Shall force me—Now they pull; hold, hold, my lord;
Yet closer——now, now, now. [*Faints.*
Lord Sal. My wife, my Ela!
Lost as thou art, oh! do not leave me.
Mor. Distressful sight! Oh, most inhuman Grey!
Ele. Nature, my lord, unequal to the conflict,
Has for a space retired within herself;
But shortly to return. This interval
Of death-like quiet will, I trust, recall
Her safer senses——She revives.
Lady Sal. But this is strange——
Ele. My lord,
Speak to her; soothe her, and she will be calm.
Lord Sal. Speak to her, soothe her——what have I with her? with thee?
Oh agonizing hour! Had I but perished
In the safe wave that buried my loved friends,
It had been well—'Twas cruelty to save me.
Lady Sal. Am I indeed awake?—Let me stand up—
What is the matter?
Lord Sal. My poor, injured wife!
Lady Sal. Nay, but inform me, I am over doubtful;
I would believe, I know—If what I now
Behold be not a dream, you are my husband?
Lord Sal. The wretch that was so called.
Lady Sal. Alas! alas!
Sure I have been afflicted sore—My lord!
My life!—why dost thou start from me? Oh take
Me to thy arms, for I have need of comfort!
Lord Sal. Art thou not undone?
Lady Sal. Indeed I have wept.
Lord Sal. Lost, stained, dishonoured by a villain!
Lady Sal. How,
My lord! Think'st thou that I have other wrongs
To weep, than thou hast seen?
Lord Sal. I heard thee cry.
Lady Sal. I know not what I did—Dishonoured—O!
The thought wakes every pulse to indignation.
Lord Sal. What! did he not assail thee?
Lady Sal. No—Assail me!
Lord Sal. Then thou art safe, thy honour unassayed?
Lady Sal. So witness Heaven!
Lord Sal. The God of Heaven be praised!
Lady Sal. —And couldst thou think so meanly of me?—Oh!
I had let the life-blood from this bosom forth,
Ere I had brooked dishonour.
Lord Sal. Best of thy sex—thy cries like daggers pierced me:
And fearful fancy pictured such a scene,
As hurried me to madness—But thou art safe,
My wife is safe! and I am blest again.
Lady Sal. My heart o'erjoys—Then wherefore do I fear?
Lord Sal. I had forgot—our son; for him thou fear'st!
Lady Sal. Not only for my son, but for thyself,
Thy precious self, I trembled—Oh, this fiend!
The slaves and agents of destruction, black
And bold, are stationed round him, and but wait
Their master's nod.
Ler. Would we were safe bestowed
Without this fearful prison!
Lady Sal. Would we were!—
Think, think, my lord, is there no way of flight?
Lord Sal. Thou hast recalled to my remembrance what,
If seconded by this our plighted friend,
May claim a serious and attentive hearing.
Mor. Small is the service I can boast, my lord;—
In all my best I shall be prompt to aid you.
Lord Sal. Hear, then. Deep underneath this vaulted ground,
Curious and close, by our forefathers scooped,
I do remember me there is a dark
And secret mine, which leads, by many a maze,
Without the castle. Not far thence there stands,
Within the bosom of an aged grove,
An house, for pious uses set apart,
The hallowed seat of godly brethren: there,
I fear not, we shall rest secure of ill.
Lady Sal. Most opportune, as could our wishes frame—
But oh! our little hope! our younger care!
Mor. My life shall answer for lord William's safety.
Lady Sal. Then let us forth.
Mor. The night is over young;
The castle's yet awake, and would but mock
The attempt.
Lord Sal. Say, what shall be the appointed hour!
Mor. Some three hours hence, my lord; or ere the clock

Perchance have told the second watch—and now,
That squint suspicion mar not, let us part.
Lady Sal. Then must we part?—But 'tis to save us all.
Three hours—farewell!—Oh! they will be three long,
Long hours to me!
Lord Sal. Farewell, my best!—Mean time
Leroches, we will rest us here apart. Farewell,
Farewell! thou soother sweet of every care!
The God, that loves the unsullied mind, descend,
And be thy guardian till we meet again! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A forest and cottage.*

Enter ARDOLF *and a Knight.*

ARD. THE storm is laid; and from the parting clouds
See where the moon steps forth, pale goddess,
Cheering the dark, dull brow of haggard night.
This is the forest—that the cottager's,
Or I do err, the appointed place of meeting.
Knt. It is: behold the rock, as was described,
The torrent foaming down his rugged side.
Ard. See, the bright harbinger of morning climbs
The steep of heaven: they're in the first repose—
Wake, peasant, wake—How balmy sweet the sleep
Of him, who stretches under rustic roof!
His task of labour o'er, content he lays
Him on his rushy couch; nor elves, nor goblins
(The coinage of swoln surfeit or of guilt)
Approach his peaceful pillow. Wake, I say:
Peasant, awake.

Enter a Peasant from the cottage.

Pea. Who calls?
What is your business, that at this late hour
You make the forest echo with your cries?
Ard. Peasant, are there not certain travellers
Within your cottage?
Pea. No.
Ard. What! saw you not
Two stranger pilgrims pass this way!
Pea. I did.
Two such arrived ere the lark had risen
From her moss cabin, or the cock
Gave note of morn.
Ard. Say, gentle cottager,
Where may they now be lodged?
Pea. Nay, stranger, that
I know not. They went hence about the time
The bat began her twilight play.
Ard. 'Tis strange
They should depart—Left they no message?
Pea. None.——
They said, they wished to see the neighbouring abbey;
But would to-night partake our homely fare.
[*Returns into the cottage.*
Ard. We now are in the precincts of the castle;
But whether to proceed, or wait, perchance
If they return, I know not.—Hark! some one
Approaches—who is there?

Enter LEROCHES.

Leroches!
Ler. Happily met—where are your friends?
Ard. At hand; and well appointed each—where is my lord?
Ler. In chains: in his own castle basely bound——
Torn from his wife and son.—How I escaped—
But haste; time is too precious now for more:
His life hangs upon each eventful moment.
Ard. In chains! his life in danger!—Ho! my friends!
To horse, quick; we will rescue him, or perish.
Ler. Ardolf, pursue the eastern causeway you;
I, with a chosen few, will trace the path,
Which led me from the postern.
Ard. Wisely cautioned:——
Divided thus, we wage an easier war. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Within the castle.*

Enter GREY *and* MORTON.

Grey. My noble Morton!——well hast thou repaid
The nicer hope which I reposed in thee.
—Their unprovided rest outruns my wishes.
Mor. Fools! not to see through my hypocrisy!
That, in the borrowed guise of honest friendship,
I studied but to lure them to my toils—
Concealed from upper light, it yields a safe
Retreat—through that they purposed their escape.
Grey. Within the secret womb of that same vault,
When all the castle's hushed, their bleeding trunks
We will deposit.
Mor. Yes—we will be bloody.
Grey. Here is the weapon—Be firm, and prosper.
[*Mor. receives a dagger, and goes out.*
——Thou too, unthinking fool, must this hour bleed—
Would it were over—they may chance to wake.—
Thou, Sleep! still child of sable-hooded night,
Befriend us! From the dark Lethean cell
Up-conjure all thy store of drowsy charms:
Lock fast their lids, o'erpower each torpid sense,

That they awake not ere the deed be done—
[*Bell tolls.*
—The second watch: and, like death's curfew, deep
And dismal verberates the solemn knell!

Enter a Knight.

Knt. A stranger, sir, who calls him Oswald, waits
Without the castle, and would speak with you.
Grey. Oswald!—He is our friend.
Knt. I have not learned
His errand; but, as it would seem, he comes
With news that much import thy present hearing.
Grey. I'll speak with him anon.
Knt. I know not what
Their purpose; but even now, as on the tower
I stood, which high o'erlooks the eastern causeway,
Methought I heard the distant sound of horses,
As hither bent in full career.
Grey. The sound
Of horse!—Look out; call up our knights—away. [*Exit Knt.*
—What can delay him?—Should my present hopes
Miscarry, I will bear the lady hence,
And make her hostage for my safety; nay,
Perchance, what I have some incentives to,
Supplant them both, the lover and the husband—
He comes!—

Re-enter MORTON.

Mor. Oh! that the earth would yawn and cover me!
Or that Heaven's quick-devouring fires had shrunk
And withered up this arm when it was raised—
Eyes! eyes! why closed ye not ere you beheld
The ghastly ruin?
Grey. Speak, direct——are they disposed?
Mor. Away!—thou hast destroyed my peace for ever—
Had you beheld him as he lay, struggling
In the cold gripe of death; cheeks o'erspread
With livid pale; those eyes, that late shot forth
So radiant, now quite sunk; their burning lamps
Extinct; while from the deep-mouthed wound,
As from a copious fountain, issued forth
Life's purple spring.
I would have fled, but horror for a space
Suspended every power.
Grey. Tis well—
Hast thou, then, slain lord Salisbury?
At thy own peril be it—Help!—He has slain
The innocent!
They're murdered, foully murdered by a slave.
[*Exit.*
Mor. The earth has teemed with prodigies—this sure
Out-monsters all!

Enter RAYMOND *hastily, with his sword drawn.*

Ray. On what purpose art thou here?
Mor. Lord Raymond cannot be a stranger, sure.
Ray. A dagger!—what hast thou done?
Mor. Did not my lord approve the deed?
Ray. What deed?
Mor. How's this!—My lord,
I had your sanction ratified by Grey;
With promise of high recompence the hour
When Salisbury should expire.
Ray. Accursed be he that told thee so; and thou
That gavest him credit!
Mor. This is strange!
Ray. Approve!
I did not; by the powers of truth I did not—
Remorseless villain!—Where, where shall I hide
Me? whither shall I fly?—O deed of horror!—
Thy blood, detested hireling, shall in part
Compensate.
Mor. Hold—He cannot sure dissemble—
Wish you, my lord, this deed were yet undone?
Ray. What would the monster? Oh! could I recall
His life by killing twenty thousand slaves
Like thee, it were a comfort!
Mor. I believe
That you are innocent: know, then, my lord,
He lives; he sleeps; and sleeps secure of harm.
Ray. Take heed thou dost not trifle!
Mor. I will confess
Me true, and heaven forgive my foul intent!
I undertook to slay this innocent:
Approached him as a friend—I saw his sufferings;
Saw his distracted wife: at length I cursed,
And in my heart abjured the wicked purpose.
Ray. Hadst thou the goodness! Then, perhaps——
Mor. I thought
Haply that you yourself might soon relent,
This instrument of purposed cruelty,
I took; and, with a fair-devised tale
Of Salisbury's death, amused the guilty wretch,
That would ensnare your quiet.
Ray. Is this honest?
Mor. Approach, my lord, approach, and let your eye
Be witness of my truth—In doing thus,
I thought I should be deemed lord Raymond's friend.
Ray. Thou wert the best of friends! Retire thou now. [*Exit Mor.*
One way there yet remains to reconcile
This double war, and heal my tortured bosom.
Thou, that so soundly sleep'st, unguarded thus
[*Going to the side of the stage.*
Against whatever ill that may approach thee,

Awake! rouse from the bed of listless sleep,
And see who comes to greet thee.

Enter LORD SALISBURY.

Lord Sal. Do I dream?
Or am I in the regions of the unblest,
Beset with monsters? Though thou art a fiend,
I will attempt thee.
Ray. Rush not on my weapon.
I have sought thee on a cause which honour loves;
And would not have thee mar my soul's fair purpose.
Lord Sal. Inglorious! base! Oh, shame to manhood! Dearly
Shalt thou atone the accumulated wrongs
That I do bleed withal. Nor sea, nor earth,
Though thou shouldst traverse her remotest climes,
Shall shelter thee from my determined fury.
Ray. Think not that I shall fly thee; or that I
Have sought thee now, but on such terms as even
May challenge thy applause. I come a foe,
Indeed, but I do come a generous foe.
Lord Sal. A generous foe! The brave indeed aspire
To generous acts; their every thought looks up,
And honour's dictates are their only function:
But thou! what terms would'st thou propose? what act
Of that essential virtue, that may rase
The ignoble stains wherewith thou art polluted?
Ray. The ignoble and the brave alike have erred;
And he, that re-ascends to virtue's height,
Does often snatch a wreath, which never bloomed
On safer wisdom's brow. First let me lose
Those ignominious bonds, which have, indeed,
My own dishonoured—not the wearer's arm.
[*Takes off his chains.*
Lord Sal. Say to what purpose tends this honest seeming?
Ray. That I have wronged thee, I confess; take this,
[*Gives him a sword, and draws another.*
The only restitution I have left.
I know thou never canst forgive, nor I
Forget: the sword, then, judge between.
Lord Sal. Indeed!
Lives there so much honour, then, within thee?
Spite of the mighty wrongs which thou hast done
Me, I do thank thee.
Ray. Now, Fortune mark her favourite!
[*Raymond is disarmed.*
Then she is partial, and I must submit.
Lord Sal. Take up thy sword again; my fair revenge
Disdains too cheap a conquest.
Ray. 'Tis too much.
Oh generous! generous even to cruelty!
Some way I would repay thee—Oh, that I
[*Takes up his sword.*
Had never seen thy wife! It may not be;
Then let me tear for ever from my breast
The guilty passion: thus I thank thee——thus
[*Wounds himself.*
Atone the mischiefs, that——Oh!——— [*Falls.*
Lord Sal. This, indeed,
Atones for all. Thou much misguided youth!
What tempted thee to stray so wide from honour?
Ray. Ask, ask that villain; he will answer all;
That villain Grey, whose wicked arts seduced me;
Forgive———I die, I die: a dreadful proof
What ills await the wretch, who gives his ear
To vicious counsels. [*Dies.*
Lord Sal. Dreadful proof indeed!
I do forgive thee, so forgive thee, Heaven!

Re-enter MORTON.

Now, where's my wife? where is my friend Leroches?
Mor. My lord, by my assistance, he has fled.
I saw how vain your purpose to escape;
His single flight was unobserved. Your friends,
In quest of whom he hasted, are arrived:
That trumpet speaks it. [*A trumpet heard.*
Lord Sal. It is, it is sir Ardolph! See, he comes.

Enter ARDOLF *and* KNIGHT.

Ard. My noble friend! safe! crowned with conquest too!
Lord Sal. Saw you Leroches?
Ard. My lord,
He sought the castle by a private path.
I thought he had been here by this.
Lord Sal. 'Tis well.
But where's my wife? my son? my soul is maimed
Of half its joys till I've again embraced them.

Enter ELEANOR.

Ele. My lord, my lord! the countess and lord William———
Send, send and save them from destruction!
With horses, that outstrip the winds, the villains
Have borne her from the castle!
Lord Sal. Ravished by villains! Mount your horses, haste!
Ard. Say, which way have they fled?
Ele. West of the castle:
Heaven grant their swiftness mock not your best speed!
Ard. Now, good my lord, if I might speak—
Lord Sal. Speak not
To me; but forth and scour the country!
Ard. Hark!
Methought I heard a voice———
Ele. And I methought.
Perhaps Heaven has been kind! perhaps 'tis she.
Lady Sal. [*Entering.*] Now, hushed be every fear—Where, where's my hero,
That I may once more hold him to my bosom?

Enter LADY SALISBURY *and* LORD WILLIAM, *conducted by* LEROCHES.

Lord Sal. 'Tis she! 'tis she!
My wife is in my arms again! Speak, speak!
Oh, whence this precious, this unlooked event?
Lady Sal. When the fell ruffian,
When Grey, with impious hands, had snatched us hence,
Then came my guardian angel——came your friend,
And rescued us from ruin.
Ler. Happy hour!
I took the path which brought me to their rescue;
The atrocious villain fell beneath this arm.
Lord Sal. My wife!
My son! my friend! My God! my guardian God!
Ele. O joy, that they are here again!
Lord Sal. They're here! they're here! my wife and son are here!
Proclaim it, O ye sons of light! spread wide
Your starry pinions, angels, spread them wide,
And trumpet loud throughout the unmeasured tracts
Of highest Heaven, that virtue is made happy!
Lady Sal. Let the sun cease to shine, the planets cease,
Drop every star from his etherial height,
Ere I forget thee, source of every good!
Lord Sal. Friends, I am much beholden to you all.
My love! the gloom, that overspread our morn,
Is now dispersed; our late mishaps,
Recalled, shall be the amusing narrative,
And story of our future evening, oft
Rehearsed. Our son, too, he shall hang upon
The sounds, and lift his little hands in praise
To heaven: taught by his mother's bright example,
That, to be truly good, is to be blessed.

[*Exeunt omnes.*

THE

EARL OF WARWICK.

BY

FRANKLIN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

KING EDWARD, *attached to lady E. Gray.*
EARL OF WARWICK, *her lover.*
EARL OF PEMBROKE, *friend to Warwick.*
EARL OF SUFFOLK, *his enemy.*

WOMEN.

MARGARET OF ANJOU, *the deposed queen.*
LADY ELIZABETH GRAY, *attached to Warwick.*
LADY CLIFFORD, *confidante of Margaret.*
Officers, Attendants, Guards, &c.

Scene—The Palace.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A palace.*

Enter MARGARET OF ANJOU, *and* LADY CLIFFORD.

Clif. THANKS, gracious Heaven! my royal mistress smiles,
Unusual gladness sparkles in her eye,
And bids me welcome in the stranger, Joy,
To his new mansion.
Marg. Yes, my faithful Clifford,
Fortune is weary of oppressing me:
Through my dark cloud of grief a cheerful ray
Of light breaks forth, and gilds the whole horizon.
Clif. Henry in chains, and Edward on the throne
Of Lancaster; thyself a prisoner here;
Thy captive son torn from his mother's arms,
And in the tyrant's power; a kingdom lost:
Amidst so many sorrows, what new hope
Hath wrought this wondrous change?
Marg. That, which alone,
In sorrow's bitterest hour, can minister
Sweet comfort to the daughters of affliction,
And bid misfortune smile—the hope of vengeance:
Vengeance! benignant patron of distress,
Thee I have oft invoked, propitious now
Thou smilest upon me; if I do not grasp
The glorious opportunity, henceforth
Indignant frown, and leave me to my fate!
Clif. Unhappy princess! that deceiver, Hope,
Hath often flattered, and as oft betrayed thee;
What hast thou gained by all its promises?
What's the reward all thy toils?
Marg. Experience——
Yes, Clifford, I have read the instructive volume
Of human nature, there long since have learned,
The way to conquer men is by their passions;
Catch but the ruling foible of their hearts,
And all their boasted virtues shrink before you.
Edward and Warwick, those detested names,
Too well thou know'st, united to destroy me.
Clif. That was, indeed, a fatal league.
Marg. But mark me;
If we could break this adamantine chain,
We might again be free: this mighty warrior,
This dread of kings, the unconquerable Warwick,

Is plighted to the fair Elizabeth.
Clif. The lady Gray, you mean, the beauteous widow,
Whose husband fell in arms for Lancaster,
Marg. The same, my Clifford—Warwick long has loved———
Clif. And means to wed her.
Marg. But if I have art,
Or she ambition, that shall never be.
Clif. Canst thou prevent it?
Marg. Yes, my Clifford; Warwick
Were a mean choice for such transcendent beauty;
I shall provide her with a fitter husband,
A nobler far, and worthier of her charms—
Young Edward———
Clif. Ha! the king! impossible!
Warwick, even now, commissioned by the state
To treat with Lewis, offers England's throne
To France's daughter; and, ere this, perhaps,
Hath signed the solemn contract.
Marg. Solemn trifles!
Mere cobweb ties—Love's a despotic tyrant,
And laughs, like other kings, at public faith,
When it opposes private happiness:
Edward is youthful, gay, and amorous;
His soul is ever open to the lure
Of beauty; and Elizabeth hath charms
Might shake a hermit's virtue.
Clif. Hath he seen
This peerless fair one?
Marg. Yes—by my contrivance,
When last he hunted in the forest, some,
Whom I had planted there, as if by chance
Alone directed, led him cross the lawn
To Grafton. There, even as my soul had wished,
The dazzling lustre of her charms surprised
His unsuspecting heart———
Clif. What followed?
Marg. Oh!
He gazed and wondered; for awhile his pride
Indignant rose, and struggled with his passion,
But love was soon victorious: and last night,
The earl of Suffolk—so my trusty spies
Inform me—was dispatched, on wings of love,
To plead his master's cause, and offer her
The throne of England.
Clif. What if she refuse
The golden bribe?
Marg. No matter; all I wish
Is but to make them foes; the generous Warwick
Is fiery, and impatient of reproof;
He will not brook a rival in his love,
Though seated on a throne; besides, thou know'st,
The haughty earl looks down with scorn on Edward,
As the mere work of his all-powerful hand,
The baby monarch of his own creation.
Clif. Believe me, madam, Edward still reveres
And loves him; still, as conscious of the debt,
Pays him with trust and confidence; their souls
Are linked together in the strictest bonds
Of sacred friendship.
Marg. That but serves my cause:
Where ties are close, and interests united,
The slightest injuries are severely felt;
Offended friendship never can forgive.
Clif. Now the full prospect opens to my view;
I see thy distant aim, and trace the paths
Of vengeance: England soon will be a scene
Of blood and horror; discord's fatal torch
Once lit up in this devoted land,
What power shall e'er extinguish it? Alas!
I tremble at the consequence.
Marg. And I
Enjoy it:—Oh! 'twill be a noble contest
Of pride 'gainst pride, oppression 'gainst oppression;
Rise but the storm, and let the waves beat high,
The wreck may be our own: in the warm struggle,
Who knows but one or both of them may fall,
And Margaret rise triumphant on their ruin!
It must be so; and see, the king approaches:
This way he passes from the council—Mark
His downcast eye! he is a stricken deer,
The arrow's in his side—he cannot 'scape:
We'll meet and speak to him.
Clif. What mean you, madam?
Marg. To ask him—what, I know, he will refuse;
That gives me fair pretext to break with him,
And join the man I hate, vindictive Warwick.
But soft, he comes———

Enter KING EDWARD, *and an Officer.*

Edw. Is Suffolk yet returned? [*To an Officer.*
Offi. No, my good liege.
Edw. Go, wait and bring him to me.
[*Exit Offi.*
I'll to my closet. Pardon me, fair lady,
I saw you not.
Marg. Perhaps it is beneath
A conqueror to look down upon his slave;
But I've a boon to ask.
Edw. Whate'er it is,
Within the limits of fair courtesy,
Which honour can bestow, I'll not refuse thee.
Marg. There was a time, when Margaret of Anjou
Would not have deigned to ask of Edward aught;
Nor was there aught, which Edward dared refuse her;
But that is past, great Warwick's arm prevailed,
And I am now your prisoner.
Edw. Since the hour,
When fortune shone propitious on the cause
Of justice, and gave victory to our arms,
You have been treated with all due respect,
Served like a queen, and lodged within our palace:
Is there aught more, you can, with reason, ask,
Or I, in prudence, grant you?
Marg. Give me back
The liberty I lost—restore my son,
And I may then, perhaps, be reconciled

To an usurper, may withhold my vengeance,
And let thee sit unpunished on—my throne.
Edw. You ask too proudly, madam; but to shew you
I cannot fear, you have your liberty.
Letters this morning I received from France,
Have offered noble ransom for your person;
Without that ransom—for the soul of Edward
Is far above the sordid lust of gold,
I grant it—from this moment you are free;
But for your son, I cannot part with him.
Marg. I scorn your bounties, scorn your proffered freedom.
What's liberty to me without my child?
But fate will place us soon above thy reach:
Thy short-lived tyranny is almost past,
The storm is gathering round thee, and will burst
With tenfold vengeance on thy guilty head.
Edw. I am not to be talked into submission,
Nor dread the menace of a clamorous woman.
Marg. Thou may'st have cause to dread a woman's power.
The time may come—mark my prophetic word—
When wayward beauty shall repay with scorn
Thy fruitless vows, and vindicate my wrongs:
The friend thou lean'st on, like a broken reed,
Shall pierce thy side, and fill thy soul with anguish,
Keen as the pangs I feel: York's perjured house
Shall sink to rise no more, and Lancaster
With added lustre re-assume the throne.
Hear this and tremble—give me back my son—
Or dread the vengeance of a desperate mother.
[*Exit Margaret.*
Edw. Imperious woman! but the voice of woe
Is ever clamorous: 'tis the privilege,
The charter of affliction to complain.
This tardy Suffolk! how I long to know,
Yet dread to hear my fate! Elizabeth,
On thee the colour of my future life
Depends, for thou alone canst make me blest,
Or cursed for ever! O! this cruel doubt
Is worse than all my tortures: but he comes,
The ambassador of love.

Enter the EARL OF SUFFOLK.

What news, my Suffolk?
Shall I be happy? O! I'm on the rack
Of expectation! Didst thou tell my tale
As if it were thy own, and may I hope—
Suf. My royal liege——
Edw. Good Suffolk, lay aside
The forms of dull respect; be brief, and tell me,
Speak, hast thou seen her? Will she be my queen?
Quick, tell me every circumstance, each word,
Each look, each gesture: didst thou mark them, Suffolk?
Suf. I did, and will recount it all; last night,
By your command, in secret I repaired
To Grafton's tufted bower, the happy seat
Of innocence and beauty; there I found
Thy soul's best hope, the fair Elizabeth;
Ne'er did these eyes behold such sweet perfection:
I found her busied in the pious office
Of filial duty, tending her sick father.
Edw. That was a lucky moment, to prefer
My humble suit: touch but the tender string
Of soft compassion in the heart, and love
Will quickly vibrate to its kindred passion;
You urged our royal purpose, then?
Suf. I did,
With all the warmth of friendship; dwelt with pleasure
On every princely virtue, that adorns
Your noble heart; she listened with attention,
And echoed back your praises.
Edw. Was not that
A kind propitious omen?
Suf. Such indeed
Hoping to find it, I called in the powers
Of flattery to my aid, and gazed upon her,
As if confounded by her dazzling beauties—
Conscious she smiled; but when, at length, I spake
Of England's monarch sighing at her feet,
The crimson glow of modesty o'erspread
Her cheek, and gave new lustre to her charms:
She turned aside, and, as she silent bowed
Her doubtful thanks, I marked the pearly tear
Steal down its secret track, and from her breast
Heard a deep sigh, she struggled to conceal;
If I have any judgment, or can trace
The hidden feelings of a woman's heart,
Her's is already fixed: I fear, my liege,
With all that England, all that thou couldst give,
The crown would sit but heavy on her brow.
Edw. Not heavier, Suffolk, than it sits on mine:
My throne is irksome to me; who would wish
To be a sovereign, when Elizabeth
Prefers a subject? Then the impetuous Warwick,
His awful virtue will chastise my weakness.
I dread his censure, dread his keen reproaches;
And dread them more, because they will be just.
I've promised Lewis to espouse his daughter,
To strengthen our alliance: would to Heaven
I had not! If I seek this coy refuser,
And break with France, Warwick will take the alarm;
If once offended, he's inexorable.
Suf. I know him well—Believe me, sir, the high
And haughty spirit, when it meets rebuke,
Is easiest checked, and sinks into submission.
Let him, my liege, who ventures to arraign
His master's conduct, look into his own:
There ever is a corner in the heart
Open to folly; Warwick is not free
From human frailties.
Edw. No: ambition fires
His noble breast, love triumphs over mine;
But well thou knowest, our eyes are ever open
To others' faults, and shut against our own.

We seldom pity woes we ne'er experienced,
Or pardon weakness, which we do not feel:
He is a hero.
Suf. Heroes are but men;
I have some cause to think so—but of that
We'll talk another time: meanwhile, my liege,
I think lord Warwick is a useful friend.
Edw. Aye, and a dangerous foe; the people love,
To adoration love him; if he falls
From his allegiance, crowds will follow him.
England has long been rent by civil broils,
And fain would rest her in the arms of peace;
Her wounds scarce closed, shall Edward open them,
And bid them bleed afresh? believe me, Suffolk,
I would not be the cause of new divisions
Amongst my people, for a thousand kingdoms.
Suf. 'Tis nobly said, and may thy grateful subjects
Revere thy virtues, and reward thy love!
Edw. O! Suffolk, did they know but half the cares,
That wait on royalty, they would not grudge
Their wretched master a few private hours
Of social happiness. If France consents,
I am undone; and Warwick hath, ere this,
Enslaved me: curse on this state policy,
That binds us thus to love at second hand!
Who knows but he may link me to a wretch;
Wed me to folly, ignorance, and pride,
Ill-nature, sickness, or deformity;
And, when I'm chained to misery, coldly tell me,
To soothe my grief, 'twas for the public good!
Suf. How far you have commissioned him, I know not;
But were I worthy to advise, my liege,
I would not be the dupe of his ambition,
But follow nature's dictates, and be happy.
England has charms beside Elizabeth's,
And beauties that——
Edw. No more; my heart is fixed
On her alone; find out this powerful rival,
I charge thee, Suffolk: yet why wish to find,
What, found, will make me wretched? were he bound
In cords of tenderest friendship round my heart,
Dearer than Warwick, dearer than thyself,
Forgive me, but I fear I should abhor him.
O think on something, that may yet be done,
To win her to my heart ere Warwick comes!
Suf. I hear he is expected every hour.
Edw. Grant, Heaven, some friendly storm may yet retard him.
I dread his presence here.

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. My liege, the earl
Of Warwick is arrived.
Edw. Ha! when? how? where?
Would he were buried in the rapid waves,
That brought him hither! comes he here to-night?
Mess. My liege, ere now he might have reached the palace,
But that the shouting multitudes press hard
On every side, and seem to worship him. [*Exit.*
Suf. Such adoration
But ill befits the idol, that receives it.
Edw. What's to be done? I cannot, must not see him,
Till all is fixed; once more, my best-loved Suffolk,
Try the soft arts of thy persuasive tongue:
What method canst thou think on, to evade
This promised marriage with ambitious France?
Suf. Summon your council, lay your thoughts before them,
Meet Warwick there, and urge a sovereign's right,
To please himself in that, which should concern
Himself alone—firm Buckingham and I
Will plead your cause against the haughty Warwick,
Whom I would treat with cold civility,
And distant state, which ever angers more
Resentful spirits than the warmth of passion.
Edw. 'Tis well advised:—mean time, if possible,
I will compose my troubled thoughts to rest:
Suffolk, adieu: if Warwick asks for me,
I am not well—I'm hunting in the forest—
I'm busy—stay—remember what I told you,
Touching the earldom, which I mean to give
Her father; that may bring her to the court;
You understand me, Suffolk—fare thee well.
[*Exit Suf.*
Why should I dread to see the man I love—
The man I reverence——Warwick is not changed,
But Edward is—Suffolk, I know, abhors him—
A favourite must be hated—if he urges
This dreadful contract, I shall hate him too:
I cannot live without Elisabeth:
I'll think no more—if I must sacrifice
My friendship or my love—the choice is made.

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter WARWICK, *speaking to an Officer.*

Warw. 'TIS well: I shall attend his highness' pleasure. [*Comes forward.*
Meet me in the council! Warwick might have claimed
A private audience—After all my toils,
My perils in his service, 'tis a cold,
Unkind reception: some base whisperer,
Some needy sycophant, perhaps, hath poisoned
My royal master's ear—or, do I judge
Too rashly? As my embassy concerns
The public welfare, he would honour me
With public thanks—Elizabeth will chide me
For this unkind delay—but honour calls,
And duty to my king: that task performed,
I haste, my love, to happiness and thee. [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Council-Chamber.*

Enter King EDWARD, *Dukes of* CLARENCE *and* BUCKINGHAM, *Earls of* SUFFOLK, PEMBROKE, *&c.*

Edw. GOOD Buckingham, I thank thee for thy counsel,
Nor blame thy honest warmth; I love this freedom;
It is the birth-right of an Englishman,
And doth become thee: what says noble Suffolk?
Suf. I would not cross my royal master's will;
But, on my soul, I think this nuptial league
With France preposterous and impolitic!
It cannot last; we are by nature foes,
And nought but mutual poverty and weakness
Can ever make us friends—she wants our aid
Against the powerful Burgundy, and therefore
Throws out this lure of beauty to ensnare you.
That purpose gained, she turns her arms against us.
Pem. Why, let her: if she comes with hostile arm,
England, thank Heaven, is ready to receive her:
I love my country, and revere my king,
As much, perhaps, as honest Buckingham,
Or my good fearful lord of Suffolk here,
Who knows so well, or would be thought to know,
What France will do hereafter: yet I think,
The faith of nations is a thing so sacred,
It ought not to be trifled with—I hate,
As much as you, the unnatural forced alliance;
And yet, my lords, if Warwick is empowered,
For so I hear he is, to treat with Lewis,
I know not how in honour you can swerve
From his conditions. [*Shouting.*
Hark! the hero comes;
Those shouts proclaim him near: the joyful people
Will usher in their great deliverer,
As he deserves.

Enter WARWICK.

Edw. Thrice welcome, noble Warwick!
Welcome to all! [*To Clarence, Pembroke, &c.*
Suf. You've had, my lord, I fear,
An arduous task, which few could execute.
But Warwick, in the council and the field,
Alike distinguished, and alike successful.
Edw. What says our cousin France?
Warw. By me, my liege,
He greets you well, and hopes, in closer ties
United, soon to wear a dearer name.
At length, thank Heaven! the iron gates of war
Are closed, and Peace displays her silken banners
O'er the contending nations; every doubt
Is now removed, and confidence established,
I hope, to last for ages.
Edw. Peace, my lord,
Is ever welcome; 'tis the gift of Heaven,
The nurse of science, art's fair patroness,
And merit's best protector; but if France
Would chain us down to ignominious terms,
Cramp our free commerce, and infringe the rights
Of our liege subjects, England may repent
Too late her rash credulity, and peace,
With all her blessings, may be bought too dear.
Warw. The shame would then be his, who made the purchase.
If any doubt my faith, my honest zeal
For thee, and for my country, let him speak,
And I will answer: punish me, just Heaven,
If in the task I have consulted aught
But England's honour, and my sovereign's glory!
Edw. Mistake me not, good Warwick; well I know
Thy spotless truth, thy honour, and thy love;
But glory has no farther charms for me:
Raised, by thy powerful aid, to England's throne,
I ask no more: already I am great
As fame and fortune with their smiles can make me,
And all I wish for now is—to be happy.
Warw. That too, my liege, hath been thy Warwick's care:
Happy thou shalt be, if the fairest form,
That ever caught a gazing lover's eye,
Joined to the sweetest, most engaging virtues,
Can make thee so:—she is indeed a gem,
Fit to adorn the brightest crown: to see,
Is to admire her; trust me, England's self,
The seat of beauty, and the throne of love,
Boasts not a fairer.
Edw. Beauty, good my lord,
Is all ideal; 'tis the wayward child
Of fancy, shifting with the changeful wind
Of fond opinion; what to you appears

The model of perfection, may disgust
My strange capricious taste.
Warw. Such charms would fix
Inconstancy itself:—her winning virtues,
Even if her beauty failed, would soon subdue
The rebel heart, and you would learn to love her.
Edw. Is passion to be learned then? wouldst thou make
A science of affection, guide the heart,
And teach it where to fix? impossible!
'Tis strange philosophy.
[*Rises and comes forward.*
My lord of Warwick,
Your zeal in England's, and in Edward's cause
Merits our thanks; but for the intended marriage
With France's daughter—it may never be.
Warw. Not be! it must: your sacred word is passed,
And cannot be recalled; but three days since
I signed the contract, and my honour's pledged
For the performance: Heavens! whilst fickle France
Is branded 'midst the nations of the earth
For breach of public faith, shall we, my liege,
Practise ourselves the vices we condemn,
Pass o'er a rival nation's every virtue,
And imitate their perfidy alone?
Edw. You'll pardon me, my lord; I thought it part
Of a king's power to have a will, to see
With his own eyes, and in life's little feast,
To cater for himself; but 'tis, it seems,
A privilege his servants can refuse him.
Warw. And so they ought—the king, who cannot conquer
His private interest for the public welfare,
Knows not his duty.
Edw. Kings, my lord, are born
With passions, feelings, hearts—like other men;
Nor see I yet, why Edward's happiness
Must fall a sacrifice to Warwick's honour.
Warw. My honour, sir, is yours; my cause your own:
Who sent me, and whose image did I bear?
The image of a great and glorious king,
Or of a weak and wavering boy?—henceforth,
Choose from the herd of fawning sycophants,
Some needy slave for your mock embasssies,
To do your work, and stain the name of England
With foul reproach—Edward, I blush for thee,
And for my country; from this hour, expect
From injured France contempt, with deep resentment
For broken faith, and enmity eternal.
Edw. Eternal be it, then! for, as I prize
My inward peace beyond the pomp of state,
And all the tinsel glare of fond ambition,
I will not wed her.—Gracious Heaven! what am I?
The meanest peasant in my realm may choose
His rustic bride, and share with her the sweets
Of mutual friendship and domestic bliss!
Why should my happier subjects, then, deny me
The common rights, the privilege of nature,
And, in a land of freedom, thus conspire
To make their king the only slave amongst them?
Warw. The worst of slaves is he, whom passion rules,
Unchecked by reason, and the powerful voice
Of friendship, which, I fear, is heard no more
By thoughtless Edward.—'Tis the curse of kings
To be surrounded by a venal herd
Of flatterers, that soothe his darling vices,
And rob their master of his subjects' love.
Nay, frown not, sirs! supported as ye are,
I fear ye not. Which of this noble train,
These well-beloved counsellors and friends,
Assembled here to witness my disgrace,
Have urged you to this base, unmanly falsehood?
Shame on you all! to stain the spotless mind
Of uncorrupted youth, undo the work
Of Warwick's friendly hand, and give him back
A sovereign so unlike the noble Edward!
Suff. My lord, we thank you for the kind suggestion,
Howe'er ill-founded; and when next we meet,
To give our voice in aught, that may concern
The public weal, no doubt shall ask your leave,
Ere we proceed.
Pemb. My lord of Suffolk, speak
But for yourself; Warwick hath too much cause
To be offended: in my poor opinion,
Whate'er you courtiers think, the best support
Of England's throne are equity and truth;
Nor will I hold that man my sov'reign's friend,
Who shall exhort him to forsake his word,
And play the hypocrite: what tie shall bind
The subject to obedience, when his king,
Bankrupt in honour, gives the royal sanction
To perfidy and falsehood?
Buck. It becomes
But ill the earl of Pembroke—
Edw. Good my lords,
Let us have no dissentions here; we meet
For other purposes—some few days hence
We shall expect your counsel in affairs
Of moment—for the present, urge no further
This matter—fare ye well.
[*The council break up and disperse.*
Edw. [*Comes to Warw.*] Lord Warwick, keep
In narrower bounds that proud impetuous temper;
It may be fatal: there are private reasons—
When time befits we shall impart them to you;
Meanwhile, if you have friendship, love, or duty,
No more of Bona—I'm determined. [*Exit Edw.*
Warw. So:
'Tis well, 'tis very well: I have deserved it;
I've borne this callow eagle on my wing,
And now he spurns me from him; 'tis a change
I little looked for, and sits heavy on me:
Alas, how doubly painful is the wound,
When 'tis inflicted by the hand we love!
Cruel, ungrateful Edward!——

†

Ha! who's here?
The captive queen! if she has aught to ask
Of me, she comes in luckless hour, for I
Am powerless now.

Enter MARGARET OF ANJOU.

Warw. Will Margaret of Anjou
Thus deign to visit her acknowledged foe?
Marg. Alas! my lord, inured to wretchedness
As I am, and familiar with misfortune,
I harbour no resentment; have long since
Forgot, that ever Warwick was my foe,
And only wish to prove myself his friend.
Warw. Talk not of friendship, 'tis an empty name,
And lives but in idea; once, indeed,
I thought I had a friend.——
Marg. Whose name was—Edward;
Read I aright, my lord, and am I not
A shrewd diviner! Yes, that down-cast eye
And gloomy aspect say I am: you look
As if the idol, made by your own hands,
Had fallen upon, and crushed you; is it not so?
Warw. Amazement! nought escapes thy piercing eye,
And penetrating judgment: 'tis too true,
I am a poor, disgraced, dishonoured slave,
Not worth thy seeking; leave me, for the tide
Of court preferment flows another way.
Marg. The feast, perhaps, you have provided, suits not
With Edward's nicer palate; he disdains,
How sweet soe'er, to taste a foreign banquet,
And relishes no dainties but his own:
Am I again mistaken?
Warw. Sure thou deal'st
With some all-knowing spirit, who imparts
Each secret purpose to thee; else how know'st thou,
That Edward had refused to wed the princess?
Marg. Oh! it requires no supernatural aid
To trace his actions, nor has Margaret trod
The paths of life with unobserving eye.
I could have told you this long since—for know,
The choice is made, the nuptial rites prepared,
Which, but for your return, as unexpected
As undesired, had been, ere this, complete;
And, as in duty bound, you then had paid
Your due obedience to our English queen.
Warw. Determined, say'st thou? Gracious Heaven! 'tis well
I am returned.
Marg. Indeed, my lord, you came
A little out of season; 'twas unkind
To interrupt your master's happiness,
To blast so fair a passion in its bloom,
And check the rising harvest of his love.
Warw. Margaret, I thank thee—yes, it must be so:
His blushes, his confusion, all confirm it;
And yet I am amazed, astonished.
Marg. Wherefore?——
Is it so strange a youthful prince should love?
Is it so strange, a mind, unfraught with wisdom,
And lifted high with proud prosperity,
Should follow pleasure through the crooked paths
Of falsehood, should forsake a useless friend
For the warm joys of animating beauty?
Warw. No: but 'tis strange, that he, who knows how much
He owed to Warwick; he, who every hour
Tastes the rich stream of bounty, should forget
The fountain, whence it flowed.
Marg. Alas! my lord,
Had you been chastened in affliction's school,
As I have been, and taught by sad experience
To know mankind, you had not fallen a prey
To such delusion.
Warw. Was it like a friend,
Was it like Edward, to conceal his love?
Some base, insinuating, artful woman,
With borrowed charms, perhaps——
Marg. Hold, hold, my lord,
Be not too rash: who fights in darkness oft
May wound a bosom friend: perhaps you wrong
The best, and most accomplished of her sex.
Warw. Know you the lady?
Marg. But as fame reports,
Of peerless beauty and transcendent charms,
But for her virtue—I must ask of—you—
Warw. Of me! What virtues? Whose?
Marg. Elizabeth's.
Warw. Amazement! no: it must not, cannot be:
Elizabeth! he could not, dare not do it!
Confusion! I shall soon discover all. [*Aside.*
But what have I to do with Edward's choice,
Whoe'er she be, if he refuses mine?
Marg. Dissimulation sits but ill, my lord,
On minds like yours: I am a poor weak woman,
And so, it seems, you think me; but suppose
That same all-knowing spirit, which you raised,
Who condescends so kindly to instruct me,
Should whisper——Warwick knows the power of love
As well as Edward; that Elizabeth
Was his first wish, the idol of his soul;
What say you? Might I venture to believe it?
Warw. Margaret, you might; for 'tis in vain to hide
A thought from thee; it might have told you too,
If it be so, there is not such a wretch
On earth as Warwick; give me but the proof—
Marg. Lord Suffolk was last night dispatched to Grafton,
To offer her a share in Edward's throne.
Warw. Which she refused: did she not, Margaret? Say
She did!
Marg. I know not that, my lord; but crowns
Are dazzling meteors in a woman's eye;
Such strong temptations, few of us, I fear,
Have virtue to resist.

Warw. Elizabeth
Has every virtue! I will not doubt her faith.
Marg. Edward is young and handsome.
Warw. Curses on him!
Think'st thou he knew my fond attachment there?
Marg. O, passing well, my lord; and when 'twas urged
How deeply it would affect you, swore by Heaven,
Imperious Warwick ne'er should be the master
Of charms like hers; 'twas happiness, he said,
Beyond a subject's merit to deserve,
Beyond his hope to wish for, or aspire to.
Warw. But for that Warwick, Edward's self had been
A subject still—and—may be so—hereafter.
Thou smil'st at my misfortunes.
Marg. I must smile,
When I behold a subtle statesman thus
Duped and deluded by a shallow boy,
Sent on a fruitless errand to expose
His country and himself—it was indeed
A master-stroke of policy, beyond,
One should have thought, the reach of years so green
As Edward's, to dispatch the weeping lover,
And seize the glorious opportunity
Of tampering with his mistress here at home.
Warw. Did Nevil, Rutland, Clifford, bleed for this?
Marg. For this, doth Henry languish in a dungeon,
And wretched Margaret live a life of woe?
For this, you gave the crown to pious Edward,
And thus he thanks you for his kingdom.
Warw. Crowns
Are baubles, fit for children like himself
To play with; I have scattered many of them:
But thus to cross me in my dearest hope,
The sweet reward of all my toils for him
And for his country; if I suffer it,
If I forgive him, may I live the scorn
Of men, a branded coward, and old age,
Without or love or reverence, be my portion!
Henceforth, good Margaret, know me for thy friend:
We will have noble vengeance: are there not
Still left amongst the lazy sons of peace
Some busy spirits, who wish well to thee,
And to thy cause?
Marg. There are; resentment sleeps,
But is not dead. Beneath the hollow cover
Of loyalty, the slumbering ashes lie
Unheeded; Warwick's animating breath
Will quickly light them into flames again.
Warw. Then, Edward, from this moment I abjure thee:
Oh! I will make thee ample recompence
For all the wrongs, that I have done the house
Of Lancaster: go, summon all thy friends;
Be quick, good Margaret, haste, ere I repent,
And yield my soul to perjured York again.
The king, I think, gives you free liberty
To range abroad?
Marg. He doth, and I will use it,
As I would ever use the gift of foes,
To his destruction.
Warw. That arch-pander, Suffolk,
That minister of vice—but time is precious;
To-morrow, Margaret, we will meet in private,
And have some further conference; mean time
Devise, consult, use every means against
Our common foe: remember, from this hour,
Warwick's thy friend—be secret and be happy.
[*Exit.*
Marg. What easy fools these cunning statesmen are,
With all their policy, when once they fall
Into a woman's power! This gallant leader,
This blustering Warwick, how the hero shrunk
And lessened to my sight! Elizabeth,
I thank thee for thy wonder-working charms;
The time perhaps may come, when I shall stand
Indebted to them for—the throne of England.
Proud York, beware; for Lancaster's great name
Shall rise superior in the lists of fame:
Fortune, that long had frowned, shall smile at last,
And make amends for all my sorrows past. [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.

Enter MARGARET, CLIFFORD, *and attendants.*

Marg. DISPATCH these letters straight to Scotland—this,
To the French envoy—these, to the earl of Pembroke. [*To a gentleman.*
Thus far, my friend, hath fortune favoured us [*Turning to Lady Clifford.*
Beyond our hopes: the soul of haughty Warwick
Is all on fire, and puling Edward loves
With most romantic ardour—O my Clifford,
You would have smiled to see how artfully
I played upon him: flattered, soothed, provoked,
And wrought him to my purpose: we are linked
In firmest bonds of amity and love.
Clif. Hath Warwick, then, so soon forgot his Edward?
Think'st thou the frantic earl will e'er exert
His ill-directed powers to pull down
The royal structure, which himself had raised?
Never.
Marg. What is there disappointed love
And unrestrained ambition will not do?
I tell thee, we are sworn and cordial friends.

Clif. Thou know'st he hates the house of Lancaster.
Marg. No matter——he has marvellous good skill
In making kings, and I have business for him.
Clif. And canst thou, then, forget the cruel wrongs,
The deep-felt injuries of oppressive Warwick,
To join the hand, that forged thy husband's chains,
And robbed thee of a crown?
Marg. But what—my Clifford,
If the same hand, that ravished, should restore it!
'Tis a court friendship, and may last as long
As interest shall direct: I've not forgot,
No, nor forgiven; I hate, abhor, detest him;
But I will use him as my instrument,
My necessary tool; I will make him draw
His traitorous sword, to sheath it in the breast
Of him he loves, then point it to his own.
Yes, Clifford, I have twined me round his heart;
Like the fell serpent crept into his bosom,
That I might sting more surely: he shall perish;
I keep him for the last dear precious morsel,
To crown the glorious banquet of revenge.
Clif. 'Tis what he merits from us; yet the attempt
Were dangerous; he is still the people's idol.
Marg. And so, perhaps, shall Margaret be; applause
Waits on success; the fickle multitude,
Like the light straw, that floats along the stream,
Glide with the current still, and follow fortune.
Our prospect brightens every hour: the people
Are ripe for a revolt: by civil wars,
Long time inured to savage scenes of plunder
And desolation, they delight in war:
These English heroes, when once fleshed with slaughter,
Like the keen mastiff, lose not soon the track
Of vengeance, nor forget the taste of blood.
Clif. What further succours have we to depend on,
Beside earl Warwick's?
Marg. O, his name alone,
Will be an army to us.
Clif. If we have it:
Resentment is a short-lived passion—what
If Warwick should relent, and turn again
To Edward?
Marg. Then I have a bosom friend,
That shall be ready to reward him for it.
But I have better hopes: without his aid,
We are not friendless: Scotland's hardy sons,
Who smile at danger, and defy the storm,
Will leave their barren mountains to defend
That liberty they love; add to the aid
Of gallant Pembroke, and the powers, which France
Will send to vindicate her injured honour:
Ere Edward can collect his force and take
The field, we shall be thirty thousand strong.
Clif. But what becomes of the young prince?
Marg. Aye; there
I am, indeed, unhappy! O my child!
How shall I set him free? hear, Nature, hear
A mother's prayer! O guide me with thy counsel,
And teach me how to save my darling boy!
Aye, now I have it: monitress divine,
I thank thee: yes; I wait but for the means
Of his escape, then fly this hated palace,
Nor will return till I can call it mine. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

Enter EDWARD *and* SUFFOLK.

Edw. I fear, we've gone too far: the indignant Warwick
Ill brooked our steady purpose; marked you, Suffolk,
With what an eye of scorn he turned him from us,
And lowered defiance—that prophetic woman!
Half of her curse already is fulfilled,
And I have lost my friend.
Suf. Some friends, perhaps,
Are better lost: you'll pardon me, my liege;
But, were it fitting, I could tell a tale
Would soon convince you—Warwick is as weak—
Edw. As Edward, thou would'st say.
Suf. But 'twill distress
Thy noble heart too much; I dare not, sir;
Yet one day you must know it.
Edw. Then by thee
Let it be told me, Suffolk; thy kind hand
Will best administer the bitter draught:
Go on, my Suffolk, speak, I charge thee, speak.
Suf. That rival, whom you wished me to discover——
Edw. Aye, what of him! quick, tell me, hast thou found
The happy traitor? give me but to know,
That I may wreak my speedy vengeance on him,
Suf. Suppose that rival were the man, whom most
You loved, the man, perhaps, whom most you feared;
Suppose 'twere—Warwick.
Edw. Ha! it cannot be:
I would not think it for a thousand worlds——
Warwick in love with her, impossible!
Now, Suffolk, do I fear thou speak'st from envy,
And jealous hatred of the noble Warwick,
Not from the love of justice or of Edward;
Where didst thou learn this falsehood?
Suf. From the lips
Of truth; from one, whose honour and whose word
You will not question; from Elizabeth.
Edw. From her! nay, then, I fear it must be so.
Suf. When last I saw her, for again I went
By your command, though hopeless of success,
With all the eloquence that I
Was master of, I urged your ardent passion,

Told her how much, how tenderly you loved her,
And pressed with eagerness to know the cause
Of her unkind refusal; till at length,
Reluctantly, with blushes, she confessed
There was a cause; she thanked you for your goodness,
'Twas more, she said, much more than she deserved;
She ever should revere her king: and if
She had a heart to give, it should be Edward's.
Edw. So kind, and yet so cruel! well, go on.
Suf. Then told me all the story of her love,
That Warwick long had wooed her——that her hand
Was promised; soon as he returned from France,
Though once her father cruelly opposed it,
They were, by his consent, to be united.
Edw. O never, Suffolk, may I live to see
That dreadful hour! designing hypocrite!
Are these his arts? is this the friend I loved?
By Heaven! she shall be mine; I will assert
A sovereign's right, and tear her from him; what
If he rebel? another civil war!
'Tis terrible! O that I could shake off
This cumbrous garb of majesty, that clings
So close around me, meet him man to man,
And try who best deserves her! but, when kings
Grow mad, their guiltless subjects pay the forfeit.
Horrible thought! good Suffolk, for a while
I would be private; therefore wait without;
Let me have no intruders; above all,
Keep Warwick from my sight. [*Exit Suffolk.*

Enter WARWICK.

Warw. Behold him here;
No welcome guest, it seems, unless I ask
My lord of Suffolk's leave; there was a time,
When Warwick wanted not his aid to gain
Admission here.
Edw. There was a time, perhaps,
When Warwick more desired, and more deserved it.
Warw. Never; I have been a foolish faithful slave;
All my best years, the morning of my life,
Have been devoted to your service: what
Are now the fruits? disgrace and infamy;
My spotless name, which never yet the breath
Of calumny had tainted, made the mock
For foreign fools to carp at: but 'tis fit
Who trust in princes, should be thus rewarded.
Edw. I thought, my lord, I had full well repaid
Your services with honours, wealth, and power
Unlimited: thy all-directing hand
Guided in secret every latent wheel
Of government, and moved the whole machine;
Warwick was all in all, and powerless Edward
Stood, like a cypher, in a great account.
Warw. Who gave that cypher worth, and seated thee
On England's throne? thy undistinguished name
Had rotted in the dust from whence it sprang,
And mouldered in oblivion, had not Warwick
Dug from its sordid mine the useless ore,
And stamped it with a diadem. Thou know'st
This wretched country, doomed, perhaps, like Rome,
To fall by its own self-destroying hand,
Tost for so many years in the rough sea
Of civil discord, but for me had perished.
In that distressful hour I seized the helm,
Bade the rough waves subside in peace, and steered
Your shattered vessel safe into the harbour.
You may despise, perhaps, that useless aid,
Which you no longer want; but know, proud youth,
He, who forgets a friend, deserves a foe.
Edw. Know, too, reproach, for benefits received,
Pays every debt, and cancels obligation.
Warw. Why, that indeed is frugal honesty,
A thrifty saving knowledge, when the debt
Grows burthensome, and cannot be discharged,
A spunge will wipe out all, and cost you nothing.
Edw. When you have counted o'er the numerous train
Of mighty gifts your bounty lavished on me,
You may remember next the injuries,
Which I have done you: let me know them all,
And I will make you ample satisfaction.
Warw. Thou canst not; thou hast robbed me of a jewel
It is not in thy power to restore:
I was the first, shall future annals say,
That broke the sacred bond of public trust
And mutual confidence; ambassadors,
In after times, mere instruments, perhaps,
Of venal statesmen, shall recall my name
To witness, that they want not an example,
And plead my guilt, to sanctify their own.
Amidst the herd of mercenary slaves,
That haunt your court, could none be found but Warwick,
To be the shameless herald of a lye?
Edw. And wouldst thou turn the vile reproach on me?
If I have broke my faith, and stained the name
Of England, thank thy own pernicious counsels,
That urged me to it, and extorted from me
A cold consent to what my heart abhorred.
Warw. I've been abused, insulted, and betrayed;
My injured honour cries aloud for vengeance;
Her wounds will never close!
Edw. These gusts of passion,
Will but inflame them; if I have been right
Informed, my lord, besides these dangerous scars
Of bleeding honour, you have other wounds
As deep, though not so fatal: such perhaps
As none but fair Elizabeth can cure.
Warw. Elizabeth!

Edw. Nay, start not, I have cause
To wonder most: I little thought, indeed,
When Warwick told me I might learn to love,
He was himself so able to instruct me;
But I've discovered all.———
Warw. And so have I;
Too well I know thy breach of friendship there,
Thy fruitless base endeavours to supplant me.
Edw. I scorn it, sir—Elizabeth hath charms,
And I have equal right with you to admire them:
Nor see I aught so godlike in the form,
So all-commanding in the name of Warwick,
That he alone should revel in the charms
Of beauty, and monopolize perfection.
I knew not of your love.
Warw. By Heaven, 'tis false!
You knew it all, and meanly took occasion,
Whilst I was busied in the noble office,
Your grace thought fit to honour me withal,
To tamper with a weak unguarded woman,
To bribe her passions high, and basely steal
A treasure, which your kingdom could not purchase.
Edw. How know you that? but be it as it may,
I had a right, nor will I tamely yield
My claim to happiness, the privilege
To choose the partner of my throne and bed:
It is a branch of my prerogative.
Warw. Prerogative!—what's that? the boast of tyrants:
A borrowed jewel, glittering in the crown
With specious lustre, lent but to betray.
You had it, sir, and hold it—from the people.
Edw. And therefore do I prize it; I would guard
Their liberties, and they shall strengthen mine:
But when proud faction and her rebel crew
Insult their sovereign, trample on his laws,
And bid defiance to his power, the people,
In justice to themselves, will then defend
His cause, and vindicate the rights they gave.
Warw. Go to your darling people, then; for soon,
If I mistake not, 'twill be needful; try
Their boasted zeal, and see if one of them
Will dare to lift his arm up in your cause,
If I forbid them.
Edw. Is it so, my lord!
Then mark my words: I've been your slave too long,
And you have ruled me with a rod of iron;
But henceforth know, proud peer, I am thy master,
And will be so: the king, who delegates
His power to others' hands, but ill deserves
The crown he wears.
Warw. Look well, then, to your own;
It sits but loosely on your head; for know,
The man, who injured Warwick, never passed
Unpunished yet.
Edw. Nor he, who threatened Edward—
You may repent it, sir—my guards there—seize
This traitor, and convey him to the tower!
There let him learn obedience.
[*Guards enter, seize* WARWICK, *and endeavour to disarm him.*
Warw. Slaves, stand off!
If I must yield my sword, I'll give it him,
Whom it so long has served; there's not a part
In this old faithful steel, that is not stained
With English blood in grateful Edward's cause.
Give me my chains, they are the bands of friendship,
Of a king's friendship; for his sake awhile
I'll wear them.
Edw. Hence! away with him———
Warw. 'Tis well:
Exert your power, it may not last you long;
For know, though Edward may forget his friend,
That England will not.—Now, sir, I attend you.
[*Exit.*
Edw. Presumptuous rebel—ha! who's here?

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. My liege,
Queen Margeret, with the prince her son, are fled;
In a few hours she hopes—for so we learn
From those, who have pursued her—to be joined
By the earl of Warwick; in his name, it seems,
She has already raised three thousand men.
Edw. Warwick in league with her! O Heaven! 'tis well
We've crushed the serpent, ere his poison spread
Throughout our kingdom—guard the palace gates;
Keep double watch; summon my troops together:
Where is my brother Clarence, Buckingham,
And Pembroke? we must check this foul rebellion.
[*Exit Mess.*

Enter the EARL OF SUFFOLK.

Suf. My liege, the duke of Clarence———
Edw. What of him?
Suf. Hath left the court; this moment I beheld him
In conference with Pembroke, who, it seems,
Is Margaret's firmest friend: 'tis whispered, both
Will join the queen.
Edw. Well: 'tis no matter; I
Have deeper cause for grief; he cannot feel
A brother's falsehood, who has lost a friend,
A friend like Warwick—Suffolk, thou beheld'st me
Betrayed, deserted by the man I loved;
Treated with cold indifference by her,
Whom I adored; forsaken by my brother,
And threatened by the subjects I protect;
Oppressed on every side: but, thou shalt see,
I have a soul superior to misfortunes.
Though rebel Clarence wrings my tortured heart,

And faithless Warwick braves me, we will yet
Maintain our right——Come on, my friend! thou know'st,
Without his boasted aid, I could have gained
The crown; without him, now, I will preserve it.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Tower.*

Enter the EARL OF WARWICK.

Warw. Mistaken mortals plan delusive schemes
Of bliss, and call futurity their own,
Yet are not masters of a moment—This
Was the appointed time, the very day,
Which should have joined me to Elizabeth
In nuptial bonds. O cruel memory,
Do not torment me!—If there be a crime
Of deeper dye, than all the guilty train
Of human vices, 'tis——ingratitude.
'Tis now two years since Henry lost the crown;
And here he is, even in this very prison,
A fellow captive now. Disgraceful thought!
How will he smile to meet his conqueror here!
O for that stoic apathy, which lulls
The drowsy soul to sweet forgetfulness!
But 'twill not be:—Elizabeth, where art thou?
Perhaps with Edward——Oh! that thought distracts me:
It is, I fear, as Margaret said; she's false.
But, when I look around me, can I hope
To find one virtue left in human kind?
My Pembroke, too! am I so soon forgotten?
O no; he comes———

Enter the EARL OF PEMBROKE.

Pemb. My friend!
Warw. My Pembroke, welcome!
Thee I have found most just and kind;
But, in the darkness of adversity,
The jewel, friendship, shines with double lustre.
Pemb. I am not of the insect train, that bask
In fortune's sunshine, and when evening damps
Arise, are seen no more: no, Warwick; what
I speak, I mean: you have been hardly treated.
Warw. Oh! Pembroke, didst thou know but half the wrongs,
That I have suffered, thou wouldst pity me.
Pemb. I would do more, much more, my Warwick: he,
Who only pities, but insults the wretched;
I come with nobler views; I come to tell thee,
That I have felt thy injuries as my own,
And will revenge them too.
Warw. How kind thou art
To feel for Warwick!
Pemb. Every honest breast
Must feel the injuries, that a good man suffers:
Thine is the common cause of all: adieu
To English freedom, when our liberty
Shall be dependent on a sovereign's nod;
When years of honest service shall be paid
With infamy and chains!
Warw. I've not deserved them.
Pemb. Nor shalt thou wear them long: for thou hast great
And powerful friends—the noble duke of Clarence,
Behold his signet—this, my Warwick, gained me
Admission here———we must be secret.
Warw. Ha!
Then I am not forsaken: Clarence!———
Pemb. Yes:
The gallant youth, with honest zeal, declared
He loved his brother much, but justice more.
Warw. Then, Edward, I defy thee: generous Clarence!
Thou know'st, the man, who thus could treat a friend,
Would soon forget a brother—But say, Pembroke,
How stands the duke of Buckingham?
Pemb. Fast bound
To Edward; he, and that smooth courtier Suffolk,
Are the two rotten pillars, that support
His tottering throne: but Margaret———
Warw. Aye; how fares
My new ally? has she escaped the tyrant?
Pemb. She has: and by some wondrous means contrived
To free her captive son.
Warw. Though I abhor,
I must admire that enterprising woman:
Her active mind is ever on the wing
In search of fresh expedients, to recover
The crown she lost.
Pemb. Already she has raised
A powerful army; all the secret foes
Of York's ambitious line rush forth in crowds,
And join her standard: ere to-morrow's sun
Shall dawn upon us, she will set thee free.
Warw. Oh! Pembroke, nothing wounds the generous mind
So deep as obligations to a foe.
Is there no way to liberty, my friend,
But through the bloody paths of civil war?
Pemb. I fear there is not.
Warw. Then it must be so:
I could have wished—but freedom and revenge,
On any terms, are welcome.
Pemb. Here, then, join we
Our hands———
Warw. Our hearts.
Pemb. Now, Warwick, be thou firm
In thy resolves; let no unmanly fears,
No foolish fond remembrance of past friendship,
Unnerve thy arm, or shake thy steady purpose.
Warw. No; by my wrongs it shall not: once, thou know'st,

I loved him but too well, and this vile prison
Is my reward! O! give me but the use
Of this once powerful arm, and thou shalt see
How it shall punish falsehood.—Are thy forces
Prepared?

Pemb. They are, and wait but for my orders:
Clarence will join us soon: our first great end
Is to secure thy liberty; that done,
We haste to seize the palace, and redeem
The fair Elizabeth.

Warw. Redeem her, ha!
Is she a captive too?

Pemb. A willing slave;
A gay state prisoner, left to roam at large
O'er the young monarch's palace.

Warw. Aye, my Pembroke,
That's more inviting than a prison. Oh,
She's false, she's false!—Who sent her there?

Pemb. She came,
It seems, to thank him for his royal bounties
To her good father, the new earl of Rivers,
Who will, no doubt, persuade her to accept——

Warw. Of Edward's hand—distraction! fly, my friend;
Haste thee to Margaret; tell her, if she hopes
For Warwick's aid, she must release him now,
Ere Edward's ill-timed mercy shall prevent her.

Pemb. I go: my friend, adieu! when next we meet,
I hope to bring thee liberty. [*Exit.*

Warw. Farewell.
She's lost! she's gone! that base seducer, Edward,
Hath wrought on her weak mind! it must be so.

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. My lord,
The lady Elizabeth.

Warw. Amazement! sure
It cannot be! Admit her, sir—why, what
[*Exit Mess.*
Could bring her here? Edward has sent her hither,
To see if I will crouch to him for pardon.
Be still, my jealous heart.

Enter ELIZABETH.

Eliz. My Warwick!

Warw. 'Tis a grace I looked not for,
That a fair favourite, who so late had tasted
The pleasures of a court, should condescend
To visit thus a poor abandoned captive.

Eliz. I come to take my portion of misfortune,
To pour the balm of comfort in, and heal,
If possible, the wounds, which I had made.
Too well, I know, I was the fatal cause
Of all thy sorrows—but the noble Edward,
For so, indeed, he is——

Warw. And art thou come,
To plead the cause of him, who sent me hither?

Eliz. I came to be the messenger of peace,
To calm thy troubled soul, and give thee rest,
To teach my Warwick to forget his wrongs.

Warw. Forget my wrongs! was that thy errand here,
To teach me low submission to a tyrant?
To ask forgiveness, kneel, and deprecate
The wrath of blustering Edward? If thou com'st,
On terms like these, to bring me freedom, know
It will not be accepted: Now I see
Through all your arts; by Heaven! I'd rather lose
A thousand lives, than owe one to his bounty.

Eliz. Either my Warwick is much changed, and so,
I fear, he is, or he would never talk
Thus coldly to me, never would despise
A life so precious, if he knew how much
Elizabeth had suffered to preserve it.
The gallant Edward, won by my entreaties——

Warw. Entreaties! didst thou, then, descend so low,
As to entreat him for me?

Eliz. Hadst thou seen,
When I implored him to forgive my Warwick,
How kind he looked, how his repenting heart
Heaved with the pangs of agonizing friendship,
Thou wouldst have pitied him.

Warw. Deceitful woman!
I see thy falsehood now; I am betrayed;
And thou art leagued with Edward to destroy me.
Go to your royal lover, and unite
Those only fit companions for each other,
A broken friendship, and a perjured love!
Give up discarded Warwick, and, to make
The compact firm, cement it with my blood.

Eliz. I thought the soul of Warwick far above
Such mean suspicions. Shall the man, whose truth,
Whose constancy, and love, have been so long
My bright example, shall he stoop so low,
As thus to listen to an idle tale,
Told by some prating courtier? if indeed
Thou couldst believe it, I should pity thee.

Warw. Where is your father, the new earl of Rivers?
Why sends he not his forces to our aid?

Eliz. He cannot: honour, gratitude, forbid,
That he should lift up his rebellious arm
Against his benefactor! well thou know'st,
Of late, when civil discord reigned amongst us,
He fought with Henry, and with Henry fell:
When injured Edward generously forgave,
Restored his forfeit lands, and late advanced him
To rank and title.

Warw. Infamy and shame;
The common nets, which fearful knavery spreads
To catch ambition's fools: mean sordid bribes.
We know the treasure they were meant to purchase.

Eliz. Unkind suggestion! how have I deserved it?
Have I for this refused a youthful monarch,
And spurned his offered sceptre at my feet,
To be reproached at last by cruel Warwick?

Had I once listened to him; had these eyes
Been dazzled with the splendour of a court,
I need not thus have changed it for a dungeon.
But, since I am suspected, witness Heaven,
And witness Warwick to my vows! henceforth,
Dear as thou art, I cast thee from my love;
Elizabeth will never wed—a traitor.
Warw. Am I awake, and did Elizabeth
Say she would never wed her faithful Warwick?
Then bear me witness too, all-judging Heaven!
Here yield I up all visionary dreams
Of future bliss, of liberty, or life.
Even the sweet hope of vengeance, that alone
Sustained my spirit, loses all its charms;
I wished for freedom but to purchase thine:
For life, but to enjoy it with my love,
And she disclaims me.
Eliz. Heaven forbid! O Warwick,
Let not the tide of passion thus o'erwhelm
Thy reason.
Warw. Canst thou pardon me? thou know'st
The unguarded warmth, the weakness of my nature.
I would not wrong thee, but I've been so oft,
So cruelly deceived!
Eliz. I know thou hast;
But never by Elizabeth.
Warw. O no!
It is impossible, that perfidy
Should wear a form like thine. [*Looking at her.*
I wonder not,
That Edward loved; no; when I look on thee,
All beauteous, all enchanting as thou art,
By Heaven! I think I could almost forgive him.
Eliz. Then, wherefore not be reconciled?
Warw. To whom?
The author of my wrongs? It cannot be:
Know, I have promised Margaret to destroy him.
Eliz. Destroy thy friend! ungenerous, cruel Warwick!
Is't not enough, that thou hast triumphed here?
Already we have pierced his noble heart
With the keen pangs of disappointed love:
And would'st thou wound his breast with added sorrows;
Would'st thou involve a nation in his ruin?
Warw. Elizabeth, no more: alas! too well
Thou know'st, there is a powerful advocate
In Warwick's breast, that pleads for perjured Edward.
Eliz. Cherish the soft emotion: O my Warwick!—
Warw. That angel form can never plead in vain;
But then, my friends—where is my solemn vow
To Margaret, and to Pembroke? There's the tie;
My honour's dearer to me——
Eliz. Than thy love;
Dearer, much dearer, than Elizabeth!
But I have done: farewell, my lord; I see
Thy deep resentment is not to be moved
By my weak influence o'er thee. [*Going.*
Warw. Stay, I charge thee.
Eliz. What is this phantom, Honour, this proud idol,
That tramples thus on every humble virtue?
This cruel, bloody Moloch, that delights
In human sacrifice! O! would to Heaven
I were its only victim! but, with me,
You offer up your country and your king,
Warw. Think on my vow, think on my promise given.
Eliz. Thy league with Margaret must be fatal: grant
We should succeed, and Lancaster once more
Assume the throne; how dear the victory,
That's purchased with our fellow-subjects' blood!
Alas! such triumphs make the conqueror weep.
But if we fail!——
Warw. Impossible.
Eliz. O! think
Betimes! what dreadful punishments await
The vanquished rebel: thou, perhaps, my love,
Shalt then be doomed on the ignominious block
To fall inglorious; and, when thou art gone,
Who shall defend thy poor Elizabeth?
Warw. Alarming thought! It staggers my firm purpose,
And makes me half a villain.

Enter an Officer.

Offi. Madam, the king demands your presence: I
Have orders to convey you to the palace.
Warw. And wilt thou leave me?
Eliz. This, my Warwick, this
Is the decisive moment; now determine,
Accept of mercy, ere it be too late;
Ere hasty Edward—Shall I say thou wilt
Return to thy obedience, and receive
Thy pardon? Shall I? Speak, my love.
Warw. Perhaps
I may accept it, if 'tis brought by thee.
Eliz. Then we shall meet in happiness—
Warw. Farewell! [*Exit Eliz.*
Warw. Now to those worst companions in affliction,
My own sad thoughts again; they're gloomy all,
And, like my habitation, full of horror.
I like not Edward's message—if he hears
My league with Margaret, he still has power
To make me feel his rage: I have deserved it—
[*A trampling heard without.*
Methought I heard a noise—this way they come;
Perhaps it is the messenger of death——

Enter PEMBROKE.

Pemb. The messenger of vengeance—see her sword;
Accept it, and be free. [*Offers the sword.*
Warw. First let me know,
To whom I am indebted for it.
Pemb. To me.
Soon as the rumour of thy foul disgrace

Had reached the public ear, the impatient people,
Uncertain of thy fate, tumultuous thronged
Around the palace, and demanded thee;
'Give us our Warwick! give us back,' they cried,
'Our hero, our deliverer!'—I stepped forth,
And bade them, instant, if they wished to save
The best of men from infamy and death,
To follow me: transported they obeyed:
I led them hither: forced the prison gates,
And brought thee this—direct it as thou wilt.
[*Gives the sword.*

Warw. Welcome, once more, thou dearest gift of Heaven,
Immortal liberty! my friend, I thank thee.
O Pembroke, would thou hadst been here! my love,
My dear Elizabeth is true.

Pemb. At least
You think so.

Warw. She has told me such sweet truths!
Edward repents him sorely, he is grieved
At his ingratitude.

Pemb. And well he may;
I fear thou art betrayed: alas, my Warwick,
Thy open, generous, unsuspecting virtue,
Thinks every heart as honest as thy own.
Thou know'st not Edward—nor Elizabeth.
The kingdom is in arms, and every hour,
It is expected France will join the queen:
England will want its great protector's aid.
Edward and Rivers have conspired to cheat
Thy credulous ear, and who so fit to spread
The flimsy web as thy Elizabeth,
Their fair ambassadress? I see thou'rt caught.

Warw. By Heaven, it may be so! I am the sport
Of fortune and of fraud.

Pemb. Away, my friend:
It is not now a time to think of her:
Margaret, supported by thy powerful name,
And joined by Clarence, waits us, at the head
Of fifteen thousand men, who, eager all
To crush a tyrant, and pull down oppression,
Attend thy wished-for presence; not a soldier
Will act or move, till Warwick shall direct them.
Edward and England's fate depend on thee.

Warw. Away, my friend, I'll follow thee.
[*Exit Pembroke.*
Yet stop
A moment—let not passion hurry me
To base dishonour—if my country calls
For Warwick's aid, shall I not hear her voice,
And save her? Pembroke may have private views,
And subtle Margaret too—Elizabeth!
I must not lose thee—O! direct me, Heaven!
[*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter ELIZABETH.

Eliz. THE royal pardon came too late, and Pembroke
Already has released him; he is gone—
Elizabeth may never see him more.
A thousand terrors haunt me; a fond father,
A guiltless sovereign, a distracted lover,
Fame, fortune, friends, and country, all depend
On one eventful moment—hark! the sound
Of distant groans; perhaps the king—perhaps
My Warwick bleeds. O! agonizing thought!
Great God of armies, whose all-guiding hand
Directs the fate of nations, O! look down
On thy own image! let not cruel discord
Divide their kindred souls! in pity hear,
Pour thy benignant spirit o'er their hearts,
And once more knit them in the bonds of peace!

Enter SUFFOLK.

Suff. The prayer of innocence is always heard.

Eliz. Ha! Suffolk, whither hast'st thou? art thou come—

Suff. I come to heal thy sorrows, lovely fair one,
To tell thee, Edward, and thy much-loved Warwick,
Once more are friends.

Eliz. Indeed! O welcome news!
My joy's too great for utterance: tell me, Suffolk,
How was it? Speak, is Warwick safe? O Heaven!

Suff. A moment's patience, and I'll tell thee all.
Margaret, thou know'st, had raised a powerful force,
That doubled Edward's troops; elate with pride,
And almost sure of victory, she urged
The tardy spearmen; on they rushed, as if
Secure of conquest: the unhappy king
Stood nobly firm, and seemed to brave his fate,
When Warwick, like a guardian god, appeared:
His noble mien, and all commanding look,
Struck deep attention; every eye was bent
Upon him, and an awful silence reigned
O'er either host. He raised his voice on high,
And 'stop,' he cried, 'your sacrilegious hands,
'Nor touch my friend: who pierces Edward's breast,
'Must pass through mine: I raised him to the throne,
'And will support him there: to you I gave,
'From you, my fellow soldiers, I expect him:
'Howe'er the cruel wrongs have wounded me,
'He never injured you, and I forgive him.'
He spake, and instant through the gazing crowd
A murmur ran; down dropped their nerveless arms,
As if enchanted by some magic power,

And with one voice they cried, long live king Edward!
Eliz. How powerful is the tongue of eloquence,
When in the cause of virtue!—well, what followed?
Suff. Encouraged by the shouting soldiers, Edward
On like a modest virgin wishing came,
Yet fearful. Warwick, with a bridegroom's speed,
To meet him flew; into each other's arms
They ran with speechless joy: the tender scene
Affected every heart, and the rough soldier,
Unused to melting sympathy, forgot
His ruthless nature, and dissolved in tears.
Eliz. Sweet reconcilement! then, Elizabeth,
Thou didst not plead in vain; but, say, how brooked
The haughty queen this unexpected change?
Suff. Abashed, confounded, for a while she strove
To stem the torrent, but in vain; then fled
Precipitate.
Eliz. But where, O where's my Warwick?
Suff. With a few chosen squadrons he pursues
The disappointed Margaret.
Eliz. O my fears!
I know not why, but at that hateful name
I tremble ever; my foreboding heart
Presages something dreadful.
Suff. Do not vex
Thy tender mind with visionary dangers.
Eliz. O! would to Heaven, that he were sheltered here,
And safe within these arms!
Suff. Be not alarmed:
He is the care of Heaven; all good men love,
All bad ones fear, him.
Eliz. Such superior merit
Must have a thousand foes, the constant mark
Of envy's poisoned darts.
Suff. There Suffolk feels
The keen reproach; with blushes I confess
There was a time, when, urged by fond ambition,
I looked on Warwick with a jealous eye:
But this last noble deed hath won my heart,
And I am now a convert to his virtues;
But see, the king approaches.

Enter KING EDWARD.

Edw. Health and peace,
And happiness to fair Elizabeth!
Thou art no stranger to the joyful news;
The lustre of those speaking eyes declares it.
Eliz. Suffolk, even now, hath blessed me with the tidings.
Edw. Oh! 'tis amazement all: Elizabeth,
When last we met, thou wert the suppliant; now
'Tis I must ask forgiveness; I, who injured
The dearest, best of men. Oh! thou hast saved
Edward from shame, and England from destruction.
Eliz. Did I not say my Warwick would be just?
Edw. Thou didst, and on those beauteous lips fair truth
And soft persuasion dwell; long time he stood
Inflexible, and, deaf to friendship's voice,
Listened to nought but all-subduing love.
In after-times, thy name shall be enrolled
Amongst the great deliverers of their country.
Eliz. I have no title to the lavish praise
Thy generous heart bestows; I only said
What duty prompted, and what love inspired;
Indulgent Heaven has crowned it with success.
Edw. Thou hast done all: I am indebted to thee
For more, much more, than I can e'er repay.
Long time, with shame, I own hath Warwick soared
Above me, but I will not be outdone
For ever by this proud aspiring rival:
Poor as I am, there yet is one way left
To pay the debt of gratitude I owe him,
One great reward for such exalted virtues;
Thyself, Elizabeth.
Eliz. What means my lord,
My royal master?
Edw. Yes; when next we meet,
I will bestow it on him, will resign
All my fond claim to happiness and thee;
Though thy dear image ne'er can be effaced
From Edward's breast, though still I doat upon thee,
Though I could hang for ever on thy beauties,
Yet will I yield them to their rightful lord;
Warwick has earned, Warwick alone deserves them.
Eliz. Would he were here to thank thee for this goodness!
Know, generous prince, Elizabeth has long
Admired thy virtues, and, could love admit
Of a divided heart, the noble Edward
Would share it with his friend.

Enter a Messenger.

Mess. My royal liege,
The rebels are dispersed, queen Margaret's son
Was slain in the pursuit, and she——
Edw. I hope
Secured——
Mess. Is taken prisoner, and will soon
Be here——
Edw. But where's lord Warwick?
Mess. Sir—the queen.

Enter MARGARET, *prisoner.*

Marg. Once more I am your prisoner.
Edw. 'Twill be prudent
Henceforth to keep you so.
Marg. You dare not!
Thou thinkst, perhaps, that I shall sue to thee
For mercy: no; in Margaret of Anjou,
Thou seest the wife, and daughter of a king.

A spirit not to be subdued; though fallen,
Triumphant still; and, though a prisoner, free.
For know, I bear a mind above the reach
Of fortune or of Edward——I have lost
All I could wish to live for, in my child;
And gained, what most I wished to gain, revenge!
Or life or death are now indifferent to me.
Edw. For thy unbounded goodness, power supreme,
Accept our praise!
Eliz. [*Kneeling.*] Accept our humble prayer!
Marg. Insulting piety! the common trick
Of hypocrites and slaves: when ye shall know
What Margaret knows, ye may not be so thankful.
Methinks 'tis pity Warwick is not here
To join in your devotion.
Eliz. Would to Heaven
He were!
Marg. That monster, that perfidious slave,
Who broke his faith to Margaret, and to thee!
Thy coward soul, unable to defend
The treasure thou hadst stolen, could meanly stoop
To court the traitor whom thou dar'st not punish.
Not so the injured Margaret—she repelled
The wrongs she felt, and the deceiver met
The fate he merited.
Edw. What fate? Even now,
Crowned with immortal wreaths, the hero comes
To bless his friends, and punish guilt like thine.
Marg. Proud and deluded wretches! I look down
With pity on you: captive as I am,
'Tis mine to judge and punish; be it yours
To hear and tremble.
Edw. Ha!
Eliz. What can this mean?
Marg. If I mistake not, Warwick is your friend,
Your lover too, I think.
Eliz. My lord, my husband.
Marg. Know then, that friend, that lover, perjured Warwick,
Hath not an hour to live.
Edw. What murtherous hand——
Marg. Mine, tyrant, mine: think not I mean to hide
The noble deed; it is my happiness,
It is my glory: thou wilt call me base,
Blood-thirsty, cruel, savage, and revengeful.
But here I stand acquitted to myself,
And every feeling heart that knows my wrongs.
To late posterity dethroned queens,
And weeping mothers, shall applaud my justice.
Edw. Justice! on whom?
Marg. Can Edward ask me? Who
Imprisoned Henry, robbed me of a crown,
And placed it on a proud usurper's head?
Who gave his sacred promise to a queen,
And broke it? Who—for which indignant Heaven
Chastised him—basely murthered my sweet boy?
Bereft of honour, fortune, husband, child,
Deprived of every comfort, what remained
For me but vengeance, what for him but death?
Edw. What hast thou done? When? Where! Speak, murtheress, speak!
Marg. Pressed by surrounding multitudes, and made
A slave, they dragged me to the conqueror's tent;
There the first horrid object I beheld,
Was the pale corpse of my poor bleeding child:
There, as the insulting Warwick stood, and seemed
To triumph o'er him—from my breast I drew
A poniard forth, and plunged it in his heart.
The astonished soldiers thronged around him, seized
And brought me here——now to your prayers again. [*Elizabeth faints.*
Edw. She faints, good Suffolk; help there! help! support!
Assist her. Lead her in. [*Exit Elizabeth.*
If it be true,
As much I fear it is, a thousand deaths
Were punishment too little for thy guilt:
Thou shalt be tortured.
Marg. Tyrant, I defy thee!
Thy threats appal not me: prepare your tortures!
Let them be sharp and cruel as thyself,
All that ingenious malice can suggest,
Or power inflict, 'twill be my comfort still,
They cannot be so great as those you feel.
Edw. Guards, take the monster hence! let her be chained
In some deep dungeon, dark as her own thoughts;
There let her perish—hence, away with her!
Marg. Despair and horror visit thee——farewell——
He comes, my triumph is complete; look there! [*Exit.*

Enter WARWICK, *leaning on two soldiers.*

Warw. Where is he? Lead me, lead me to my king.
Edw. My Warwick! my preserver! she shall bleed
For this in every vein.
Warw. Think not of her,
She has no power to hurt thee! and with guilt
Like her's, 'tis punishment enough to live:
This is no time for vengeance; death comes on
With hasty strides—'tis but a little while—
A few short moments, and we part for ever.
My friend——
Edw. I am not worthy of the name,
For I disgraced, dishonoured, murdered thee
Edward's unkindness was the cause of all:
Canst thou forgive me?
Warw. O! may Warwick's crimes
Ne'er meet forgiveness from offended Heaven

If from my soul I do not pardon, love,
And honour thee!
Edw. Away, let me support him!
'Tis the last office I shall e'er perform
For thee, my Warwick——Wilt thou lean upon me,
And seal my pardon with one kind embrace?
Warw. We never hated.
Edw. But my love was blind.
Warw. And blinder my resentment.
Edw. I forgot
Thy services.
Warw. And I remembered not
Thou wert my king——My sweet Elizabeth,
Where is she? Edward, do not keep her from me;
We are no rivals now.
Edw. Shocked at the news
Of thy untimely fate, she sunk beneath it,
And fainted in these arms: I seized the occasion,
And bade her weeping maidens bear her hence:
This would have been a dreadful sight indeed.
Eliz. [*Without.*] I can, I will support it.
Warw. Ha! that voice——
Sure 'tis Elizabeth's!

Enter ELIZABETH.

Eliz. O! give me way,
For I must see him—O! my Warwick!
Warw. O!
This is too much! the bitterness of death
Is to be severed thus from those we love.
Edw. Why would you bring her here?
[*To the Attendants.*
Warw. Elizabeth,
Be comforted.
Eliz. O no, it is my doom
Never to taste of joy or comfort more:
No; from this hateful world will I retire,
And mourn my Warwick's fate, imploring Heaven,
That I may soon wear out my little store
Of hopeless days, and join thee in the tomb.
Warw. That must not be: I've done my friend a wrong,
And only thou canst make atonement for it.
Thy hand, Elizabeth; if e'er thou loved'st,
Observe me now—thine, Edward. For my sake
Cherish this beauteous mourner, take her from me,
As the last present of a dying friend.
Edw. If aught could make the precious gift more dear,
It would be, Warwick, that it came from thee.
O! I will guard her with a parent's care
From every ill, watch over and protect her;
And, when the memory of thee shall awake,
As oft it will, her poignant griefs, repel
The rising sigh, wipe off the flowing tear,
And strive to charm her to forgetfulness.
Warw. Wilt thou indeed? Then I shall die in peace.
Eliz. Yet thou mayst live.
Warw. Impossible: I feel
The hand of death press cold upon my heart,
And all will soon be o'er; I have lived to save
My falling country, to repent my crimes,
Redeem my honour, and restore my king.
Edw. Alas! my friend, the memory of thee
Will poison every bliss.
Warw. All healing time,
That closes every wound, shall pour its balm
O'er thine. Meanwhile, remember Warwick's fate.
I gave my word to Margaret, and broke it;
Heaven is not to be mocked, it soon o'ertakes us,
And in our crime we meet our punishment.
O, Edward! if thou hop'st that length of days,
And fair prosperity, shall crown thy wishes,
Beware of passion and resentment; make
Thy people's good and happiness thy own;
Discourage faction, banish flatterers, keep
Thy faith inviolate, and reign in peace.
I can no more—My love! Have mercy, Heaven!
[*Dies.*
Edw. He's gone!——
Eliz. And with him all my hopes of bliss.
Edw. Let every honour, to a soldier due,
Attend the hero to his tomb—meanwhile,
Deep in the living tablet of my heart,
Will I engrave thy words—illustrious shade!
Living, thou wert my counsellor and friend,
And, dead, I will remember and obey thee.
Eliz. Warwick, farewell! I shall not long survive thee.
Edw. I hope thou wilt—Elizabeth, remember
His dying charge, think on thy promise given.
Thou shalt remain with me, with me lament
Our common benefactor; we will sit
And talk together of my Warwick's virtues,
For I will try to emulate them all,
And learn, by copying him, to merit thee.
His great example shall inspire my breast
With patriot zeal, shall teach me to subdue
The power of faction, vanquish party rage,
And make me, what alone I wish to be,
The happy king of an united people.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

ZENOBIA.

BY

MURPHY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

PHARASMANES, *Usurper of Iberia.*
RHADAMISTUS, TERIBAZUS, } *his sons.*
ZOPIRON, TIGRANES, } *courtiers.*
MEGISTUS, *a shepherd, preserver of Zenobia's life.*

WOMEN.

ZENOBIA, *wife to Rhadamistus.*
ZELMIRA, *wife of Zopiron.*
Attendants, Guards, &c.

Scene—Lies in Pharasmanes' camp, on the banks of the Araxes.

ACT. I.

SCENE I.

Zelm. THROUGH the wide camp 'tis awful solitude!
On every tent, which, at the morning's dawn,
Rung with the din of arms, deep silence sits,
Adding new terrors to the dreadful scene!
My heart dies in me!—hark! with hideous roar
The turbulent Araxes foams along,
And rolls his torrent through yon depth of woods!
'Tis terrible to hear!—who's there?—Zopiron!

Enter ZOPIRON.

Zelm. My lord; my husband!—help me; lend your aid!
Zop. Why didst thou leave thy tent?—Why thus afflict
Thy anxious breast, thou partner of my heart?
Why wilt thou thus distract thy tender nature
With groundless fears? Ere yonder sun shall visit
The western sky, all will be hushed to peace.
Zelm. The interval is horrid; big with woe,
With consternation, peril, and dismay!
And oh! if here, while yet the fate of nations,
Suspended, hangs upon the doubtful sword,
If here the trembling heart thus shrink with horror,
Here in these tents, in this unpeopled camp,
Oh! think, Zopiron, in yon field of death,
Where numbers soon in purple heaps shall bleed,
What feelings there must throb in every breast?
How long, ambition, wilt thou stalk the earth,
And thus lay waste mankind!———
Zop. This day, at length,
The warlike king, victorious Pharasmanes,
Closes the scene of war. The Roman bands
But ill can cope with the embattled numbers
Asia pours forth, a firm, undaunted host!
A nation under arms! and every bosom
To deeds of glory fired!—Iberia then———
Zelm. Perish Iberia!—may the sons of Rome
Pour rapid vengeance on her falling ranks,
That he, who tramples on the rights of nature,
May see his vassals overwhelmed in ruin,
May from yon field be led in sullen chains,
To grace the triumph of imperial Rome,
And from the assembled senate humbly learn
The dictates of humanity and justice!

Zop. Thy generous zeal, thy every sentiment
Charms my delighted soul. But thou be cautious,
And check the rising ardour that inflames thee!
The tyrant spares nor sex nor innocence.——
Zelm. Indignant of controul, he spurns each law,
Each holy sanction, that restrains the nations,
And forms 'twixt man and man the bond of peace.
Zop. This is the tyger's den; with human gore
For ever floats the pavement; with the shrieks
Of matrons weeping o'er their slaughtered sons,
The cries of virgins, to the brutal arms
Of violation dragged, with ceaseless groans
Of varied misery, for ever rings
The dreary region of his cursed domain.
Zelm. To multiply his crimes, a beauteous captive,
The afflicted Ariana—she—for her,
For that fair excellence my bosom bleeds!
She, in the prime of every blooming grace,
When next the glowing hour of riot comes,
Shall fall a victim to his base desires———
Zop. The bounteous gods may succour virtue still!
In this day's battle, which perhaps ere now
The charging hosts have joined, should Roman valour
Prevail o'er Asia's numbers——
Zelm. That event
Is all our hope. And lo! on yonder rampart,
Trembling with wild anxiety, she stands,
Invokes each god, and bids her straining eye
Explore the distant field.
Zop. Yes, there she's fixed
A statue of despair!——That tender bosom
Heaves with no common grief—I've marked her oft,
And, if I read aright, some mighty cause
Of hoarded anguish, some peculiar woe
Preys on her mind unseen!—But, ha! behold,
She faints; her fears, too powerful for her frame,
Sink that frail beauty drooping to the earth.
[*Exit hastily.*
Zelm. Haste, fly, Zopiron, fly with instant succour;
Support her; help her;—lo! the attendant train
Have caught her in their arms!—Assist her, Heaven,
Assuage the sorrows of her gentle spirit!
Her fluttering sense returns;—and now this way
The virgins lead her. May the avenging gods,
In pity of the woes such virtue feels,
In pity of the wrongs a world endures,
With power resistless arm the Roman legions,
That they may hurl, in one collected blow,
Assured destruction on the tyrant's head!

Enter ZENOBIA, *leaning on two attendants.*

Zen. A little onward, still a little onward
Support my steps——
Zelm. How fares it, madam, now?
Zen. My strength returns—I thank ye, generous maids,
And would I could requite you—fruitless thanks
Are all a wretch can give.
First attend. The gentle office
Of mild benevolence our nature prompts—
Your merit too commands:—on Ariana
We tend with willing, with delighted care,
And that delight o'erpays us for our trouble.
Zen. Your cares for me denote a heart that feels
For others' woes. Methinks, with strength renewed,
I could adventure forth again.
Second attend. 'Twere best
Repose your wearied spirits—we will seek
Yon rising ground, and bring the swiftest tidings
Of all the mingled tumult.
Zen. Go, my virgins;
Watch well each movement of the marshalled field;
Each turn of fortune;—let me know it all;
Each varying circumstance.
Zel. And will you thus,
Be doomed for ever, Ariana, thus
A willing prey to visionary ills,
The self-consuming votarist of care?
Zen. Alas! I'm doomed to weep—the wrath of Heaven,
With inexhausted vengeance, follows still,
And each day comes with aggravated woes.
Zel. Yet, when Iberia's king, when Pharasmanes,
With all a lover's fondness——
Zen. Name him not!
Name not a monster horrible with blood,
The widow's, orphan's, and the virgin's tears!
Zel. Yet, savage as he is, at sight of thee
Each fiercer passion softens into love.
To you he bends; the monarch of the east,
Dejected, droops beneath your cold disdain,
And all the tyranny of female pride.
Zen. That pride is virtue; virtue, that abhors
The tyrant reeking from a brother's murder!
Oh, Mithridates! ever honoured shade!
Peaceful he reigned, dispensing good around him,
In the mild eve of honourable days!
Through all her peopled realm Armenia felt
His equal sway: The sunset of his power,
With fainter beams, but undiminished glory,
Still shone serene; while every conscious subject,
With tears of praise, beheld his calm decline,
And blessed the parting ray!—yet then, Zelmira,
Oh, fact accursed!—yes, Pharasmanes then—
Detested perfidy! nor ties of blood,
Nor sacred laws, nor the just gods, restrain him—
In the dead midnight hour, the fell assassin
Rushed on the slumber of the virtuous man;
His life blood gushed! The venerable king
Waked, saw a brother armed against his life—
Forgave him, and expired!
Zel. Yet wherefore open

Afresh the wounds, which time long since hath closed?
This day confirms the sceptre in his hand——
Zen. Confirms his sceptre—his!——indignant gods!
Will no red vengeance, from your stores of wrath,
Burst down to crush the tyrant in his guilt?
His sceptre, saidst thou?——urge that word no more——
The sceptre of his son!—the solemn right
Of Rhadamistus! Mithridates' choice,
That called him to his daughter's nuptial bed,
Approved him lineal heir; consenting nobles,
The public will, the sanction of the laws,
All ratified his claim—yet curst ambition,
Deaf to a nation's voice, a nation's charter,
Not satisfied to fill Iberia's throne,
Made war, unnatural war, against a son,
Usurped his throne, and, with remorseless rage,
Pursued his life!
Zel. Can Ariana plead
For such a son?—Means she to varnish o'er
The guilt of Rhadamistus?
Zen. Guilt, Zelmira!
Zel. Guilt that shoots horror through my aching heart!
Poor lost Zenobia!
Zen. And do her misfortunes
Awaken tender pity in your breast?
Zel. Ill-fated princess! in her vernal bloom
By a false husband murdered!—from the stem
A rose-bud torn, and in some desert cave
Thrown by, to moulder into silent dust!
Zen. You knew not Rhadamistus!——Pharasmanes
Knew not the early virtues of his son:
As yet an infant, in his tenderest years
His father sent him to Armenia's court,
That Mithridates' care might form his mind
To arts, to wisdom, and to manners, worthy
Armenia's sceptre, and Zenobia's love.
The world, delighted, saw each dawning virtue,
Each nameless grace, to full perfection rising!—
Oh! he was all the fondest maid could wish—
All truth, all honour, tenderness and love!
Yet from his empire thrown! with merciless fury
His father following—slaughter raging round,
What could the hero in that dire extreme!
Zel. Those strong impassioned looks!—some fatal secret
Works in her heart, and melts her into tears.
[*Aside.*
Zen. Driven to the margin of Araxes' flood—
No means of flight—aghast, he looked around—
Wild throbbed his bosom with conflicting passions——
And must I, then'—tears gushed and choaked his voice——
'And must I leave thee, then, Zenobia?—must
'Thy beauteous form'—he paused, then aimed a poniard
At his great heart—But, oh! I rushed upon him,
And with these arms, close-wreathing round his neck,
With all the vehemence of prayers and shrieks,
Implored the only boon he then could grant,
To perish with him in a fond embrace!
The foe drew near—time pressed—no way was left——
He clasped me to his heart—together both,
Locked in the folds of love, we plunged at once,
And sought a requiem in the roaring flood.
Zel.—This wondrous tale—this sudden burst of passion—
Zen. Ha! whither has my frenzy led me!—hark!
That sound of triumph! lost, for ever lost!
Ruined Armenia——oh! devoted race!
[*A flourish of trumpets.*

Enter TIGRANES, *Soldiers, and some Prisoners.*

Zen. Thy looks, Tigranes, indicate thy purpose!
The armies met, and Pharasmanes conquered;
Is it not so?
Tig. As yet with pent up fury
The soldier pants to let destruction loose.
With eager speed we urged our rapid march,
To where the Romans, tented in the vale,
With cold delay protract the lingering war.
At our approach their scanty numbers form
Their feeble lines, the future prey of vengeance.
Zen. And wherefore, when thy sword demands its share
Of havock in that scene of blood and horror,
Wherefore returnest thou to this lonely camp?
Tig. With cautious eye as I explored the forest,
Which rises thick near yonder ridge of mountains,
And stretches o'er the interminable plain,
I saw these captives in the gloomy wood,
Seeking, with silent march, the Roman camp.
Impaled alive 'tis Pharasmanes' will
They suffer death in misery of torment.
Zen. Unhappy men! and must they——ha? that face,
That aged mien! that venerable form!
Immortal powers! is it my more than father!
—Is that Megistus?
Meg. Ariana here!
Gods! could I ever hope to see her more?
Thou virtuous maid! thou darling of my age!
Zen. It is—it is Megistus! once again,
Thus let me fall and clasp his reverend knee,
Print the warm kiss of gratitude and love
Upon this trembling hand, and pour the tears,
The mingled tears of wonder and of joy!
Meg. Rise, Ariana, rise—almighty gods!
The tide of joy and transport pours too fast
Along these withered veins—it is too much
For a poor weak old man, worn out with grief
And palsied age, it is too much to bear!
Oh! Ariana, daughter of affliction,

Have I then found thee? do I thus behold thee!
Now I can die content!
Zen. Thou best of men!
These joys our tears and looks can only speak.
Meg. Yet they are cruel joys—mysterious heaven!
You bid the storm o'ercast our darksome ways;
You gild the cloud with gleams of cheering light;
Then comes a breath from you, and all is vanished!
Zen. Wherefore dejected thus———
Meg. Alas! to meet thee
But for a moment, and then part for ever!
To meet thee here, only to grieve thee more,
To add to thy afflictions, wound that bosom
Where mild affection,——where each virtue dwells,
Just to behold thee, and then close my eyes
In endless night, while you survey my pangs
In the approaching agony of torment———
Zen. Talk not of agony; 'tis rapture all!
And who has power to tear thee from my heart?
Meg. Alas! the charge of vile imputed guilt—
Zen. I know thy truth, thy pure exalted mind———
Thy sense of noble deeds—imputed guilt!
Oh! none will dare—hast thou, Tigranes? what,
What is his crime? blush, foul traducer, blush!
Oh! [*to Meg.*] the wide world must own thy every virtue.
Tig. If in the conscious forest I beheld
Their dark complottings———
Zen. Peace, vile slanderer, peace!
Thou knowest who captivates a monarch's heart———
'Tis I protect him——Ariana does it!———
Thou, venerable man! in my pavillion
I'll lodge thee safe from danger——oh! this joy,
This best supreme delight the gods have sent,
In pity for whole years of countless woe.
[*Exit Zen. with Meg.*
Tig. With what wild fury her conflicting passions
Rise to a storm, a tempest of the soul!
I know the latent cause—her heart revolts,
And leagues in secret with the Roman arms.
Zel. Beware, Tigranes! that excess of joy,
Those quick, those varied passions strongly speak
The stranger has an interest in her heart.
Besides, thou knowest o'er Pharasmanes' will
She holds supreme dominion———
Tig. True, she rules him
With boundless sway——
Zel. Nay, more to wake thy fears——
The youthful prince, the valiant Teribazus,
In secret sighs, and feels the ray of beauty
Through every sense soft-thrilling to his heart.
He too becomes thy foe.
Tig. Unguarded man!
Whate'er he loves or hates, with generous warmth,
As nature prompts, that dares he to avow,
And lets each passion stand confessed to view;
Such too is Ariana; bold and open,
She kindly gives instructions to her foe,
To mar her best designs.
Zel. Her foe, Tigranes!
That lovely form enshrines the gentlest virtues,
Softest compassion, unaffected wisdom,
To outward beauty lending higher charms,
Adorning and adorned! the generous prince,
He too—full well thou knowest him—he unites
In the heroic mould of manly firmness,
Each mild attractive art—oh! surely none
Envy the fair renown that's earned by virtue.
Tig. None should, Zelmira. Ha! those warlike notes!

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Each weary soldier rest upon his arms,
And wait the king's return—Zelmira, say,
In these dark moments of impending horror,
How fares thy beauteous friend? her tender spirit
But ill supports the fierce alarms of war.

Enter ZENOBIA.

Zen. Where is he? let me fly—oh! Pharasmanes———
Methought those sounds bespoke the king's approach——
Oh! Teribazus, tell me—have the fates—
This horrible suspense———
Ter. I came, bright maid,
To hush the wild emotions of thy heart.
Devouring slaughter for a while suspends
Its ruthless rage; as either host advanced
In dread array, and from the burnished arms
Of Asia's ranks redoubled sunbeams played,
Burning with bright diversities of day,
Came forth an herald from the Roman camp
With proffered terms—my father deigned for once
To yield to mild persuasion—in his tent
The ambassador of Rome will soon attend him,
To sheathe the sword, and give the nation peace.
Zen. But oh! no peace for me, misfortune's heir!
The wretched heir of misery! But now
A more than father found, yet cruel men
Would tear him from me—generous, generous prince,
Spare an old man, whose head is white with age,
Nor let them wound me with the sharpest pang,
That ever tortured a poor bleeding heart!
Ter. Arise, my fair; let not a storm of grief
Thus bend to earth my Ariana's beauties;
Soon shall they all revive———
Zen. They brought him fettered,
Bound like a murderer! Tigranes, he,
This is the author of the horrid charge——
He threatens instant death—but oh! protect,
Protect an innocent, a good old man,
Or stretch me with him on the mournful bier!

Ter. By Heaven, whoe'er he is, since dear to you,
He shall not suffer—quick, direct me to him—
My guards shall safe inclose him.
Zen. In my pavillion
He waits his doom——
Ter. Myself will bear the tidings
Of life, of joy, and liberty restored.————
And thou, artificer of ill, thou false,
Thou vile defamer! leave thy treacherous arts,
Nor dare accuse whom Ariana loves. [*Exit Ter.*
Zen. Zelmira, this is happiness supreme!
Oh! to have met with unexampled goodness,
To owe my all, my very life itself,
To an unknown but hospitable hand,
And thus enabled by the bounteous gods,
To pay the vast, vast debt——'tis ecstacy
That swells above all bounds, till the fond heart
Ache with delight, and thus run o'er in tears.
Zel. What must Zelmira think? at first, your tongue
Grew lavish in the praise of Rhadamistus,
With hints obscure touching your high descent;
And now, this hoary sage——is he your father?
My mind is lost in wonder and in doubt.
Zen. Then, to dispel thy doubts, and tell, at once,
What deep reserve has hid within my heart,
——I am Zenobia—I that ill-starred wretch!
The daughter of a sceptered ancestry,
And now the slave of Mithridates' brother!
Zel. Long lost Zenobia, and restored at length!
I am your subject; oh! my queen! my sovereign!
Zen. Thou generous friend! rise, my Zelmira, rise.
That good old man!—oh! it was he beheld me
Borne far away from Rhadamistus' arms,
Just perished, just lost!——
He dashed into the flood, redeemed me thence,
And brought me back to life. My opening eyes
Just saw the light, and closed again to shun it.
Each vital power was sunk; but he, well skilled
In potent herbs, recalled my fluttering soul.
Zel. May the propitious gods reward his care!
Zen. With me he saved a dear, a precious boy,
Then in the womb concealed; he saved my child
To trace his father's loved resemblance to me,
The dear, dear offspring of our bridal loves.
Zel. Oh! blessings on him, blessings on his head!
Zen. Resigned and patient I since dwelt with him,
Far in the mazes of a winding wood,
Midst hoary mountains, and deep caverned rocks.
But oh! the fond idea of my lord
Pursued me still, or in the caverned rock,
The mountain's brow, or pendent forest's gloom.
The sun looked joyless down; each lonely night
Heard my griefs echoing through the woodland shade.
My infant Rhadamistus! he is lost;
He, too, is wrested from me!—Midst the rage,
And the wide waste of war, the hell-hound troops
Of Pharasmanes sought my lone retreat,
And, from the violated shades, from all
My soul held dear, the barbarous ruffians tore me,
And never shall the wretched mother see
Her child again!
Zel. Heaven may restore him still——
May still restore your royal husband too——
Who knows but some protecting god——
Zen. No god,
No guardian power was present!—he is lost!—
Oh, Rhadamistus! oh, my honoured lord!
No pitying eye beheld thy decent form——
The rolling flood devoured thee! thou hast found
A watry grave, and the last dismal accents,
That trembled on thy tongue, came bubbling up,
And murmured lost Zenobia!
Zel. Yet be calm;
The gods may bring redress—even now they give,
To misery like thine, the heartfelt joy
Of shielding injured virtue.
Zen. Yes, Zelmira,
That pure delight is mine, a ray from heaven
That bids affliction smile—All-gracious powers!
Make me your agent, here, to save Megistus;
I'll bear the load of life, bear all its ills,
Till you shall bid this sad world-weary spirit
To peaceful regions wing her happy flight,
And seek my lord in the dark realms of night;
Seek his dear shade in every pensive grove,
And bear him all my constancy and love.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.

Enter TIGRANES.

Tig. A FALSE accuser deemed!—artificer of fraud!
Those words, intemperate boy—thy phrenzy, too,
Deluded fair! shall cost you dear atonement.
Yet, till occasion rise—the king approaches.
[*Grand warlike music.*

A military procession. Enter PHARASMANES, *&c.*
Phar. At length, the fame of Pharasmanes' arms
Hath awed the nations round. Rome shrinks aghast
With pale dismay, recalls her trembling legions,
And deprecates the war. Oh! what a scene
Of glorious havoc had yon field beheld,

If peaceful counsels had not checked my fury!
Valiant Tigranes, those rebellious slaves,
Thy care detected, have they suffered death?
Tig. Your pardon, sir—their doom, as yet, suspended——
The generous prince—I would not utter aught
Should injure Teribazus——
Phar. Ha! proceed,
And give me all the truth.
Tig. By his command—
His tender nature deemed it barbarous rigour
To urge their sentence—
Phar. Vain aspiring boy!
Tell Teribazus—

Enter ZENOBIA.

Tell the unthinking prince,
The rash presumptuous stripling, these his arts,
These practices of popular demeanour,
Are treason to his father. Let him know,
Through wide Armenia and Iberia's realm
My will is fate—the slaves shall meet their doom.
Zen. Oh! mighty king, thus bending lowly down,
An humble suppliant———
Phar. Ariana here!
Thou beauteous mourner, let no care molest
Thy tender bosom; rise, and bid thy charms
Beam forth thy gentlest lustre, to adorn
The glories of my triumph.
Zen. Oh! a wretch like me
It best befits, thus grovelling on the earth,
To bathe your feet with tears.
Phar. It must not be——— [*He raises her.*
By Heaven, renown in arms in vain attends me,
If the loved graces of thy matchless form
Are thus depressed and languish in affliction,
Like flowers that droop and hang their pining heads
Beneath the rigour of relentless skies.
Zen. If thou wouldst raise me from the depths of woe,
Forgive those captives, whom thy fatal anger
Adjudged to death, nor let ill-timed resentment
Fall on the prince your son—'twas I—my tears—
My piercing lamentations won his heart
To arrest their doom——
Phar. For traitors to my crown
Does Ariana plead?
Zen. For mild humanity
My suppliant voice is raised—I point the means
To add new glory to your fame in arms.
In nought so near can men approach the gods,
As the dear act of giving life to others.
In feats of war the glory is divided,
To all imparted, to each common man,
And fortune too shall vindicate her share.
But, of sweet mercy, the vast, vast renown
Is all your own; nor officer, nor soldier
Can claim a part—the praise, the honoured praise,
Adorns the victor; nor is the echo lost
'Midst shouts of armies, and the trumpet's sound.
He conquers even victory itself,
Than hero more—a blessing to the world!
Phar. Thy eloquence disarms my stubborn soul.
But wherefore urgent thus? Amidst the band,
Is there who claims thy soft solicitude?
Zen. A hoary sage—alas! a more than father——
The best of men—preserver of my being——
A blameless shepherd! void of fraud and guilt,
Innoxious through his life—Oh! mighty king,
Spare an old man, a venerable sire!
Nought has your fortune greater than the power
To serve humanity!—shew that your heart
Has the sweet grace, the generous virtue too!
Phar. My soul relents, and yields to thy entreaty,
Thy violence of prayer—release him straight——
My brightest honours wait him; honours fit
For him who gave thee birth; for him whose virtue
Thy generous soul deems worthy its esteem.
Zen. Our humble station seeks nor pomp nor splendour;
We only ask, unenvied and obscure,
To live in blameless innocence; to seek
Our calm retreat, embraced in depth of woods,
And dwell with peace and humble virtue there.
Phar. That cold disdain, which shuns admiring eyes,
Attracts the more, exalting every charm.
No more of humble birth; thy matchless beauty,
Like gems, that in the mine conceal their lustre,
Was formed to dignify the eastern throne.
My sceptre, that strikes terror to each heart,
Graced by thy decent hand, shall make each subject
Adore thy softer sway. The glorious æra
Of Pharasmanes' love, his date of empire
With Ariana shared, henceforth begins,
And leads the laughing hours; but, first, the storm
Of war and wild commotion must be hushed——
That mighty care now calls me to my throne,
To give the Roman audience; audience fit
To strike a citizen of Rome with awe,
When he beholds the majesty of kings. [*Going.*

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Dread sir, the Roman embassy approaches.
From yonder rampart, that invests your camp,
I heard their horses hoofs, with eager speed,
Beat the resounding soil.
Phar. Let them approach———
And thou, whose arrogance—but I forbear——
When Ariana pardons, my resentment
Yields to her smiles, and looks away its rage.
As when the crimes of men Jove's wrath demand,
And the red thunder quivers in his hand;
The queen of love his vengeance can disarm
With the soft eloquence of every charm;

Controul his passions with resistless sway,
And the impending storm smile to serenest day.
[*Exit with his train.*
Ter. And may I, then, once more, thou bright perfection,
May Teribazus once again approach thee,
While thus my father, my ambitious father,
At sight of thee forgets his cruel nature,
And wonders how he feels thy beauty's power?
Oh! may I—but I am too importunate——
Your looks rebuke me from you, and I see
How hateful I am grown!
Zen. Mistake me not,
Nor rashly thus arraign the looks of one,
Whose heart lies bleeding here——thy generous worth
Is oft the live-long day my favourite theme.
But oh! for me, for wretched Ariana,
The god of love long since hath quenched his torch,
And every source of joy lies dead within me.
Ter. That cold averted look! but I am used
To bear your scorn; your scorn that wounds the deeper,
Masked as it is with pity and esteem.
Yet love incurable, relentless love,
Burns here a constant flame, that rises still,
And will to madness kindle, should I see
That hoard of sweets, that treasury of charms,
Yield to another, to a barbarous rival,
Who persecutes a son to his undoing.
Zen. If Ariana's happiness would wound thee,
Thou wilt ne'er have cause to murmur or repine.
Nought can divorce me from the black despair
To which I have long been wedded.
Ter. Calm disdain,
I grant you, well becomes the tyrant fair
Whom Pharasmanes destines for his throne.
But oh! in pity to this breaking heart,
Give me, in mercy, give some other rival,
Whom I may stab—without remorse may stab,
'Midst his delight, in all his heaven of bliss,
And spurn him from the joys, that, scorpion-like,
Shoot anguish here—here, through my very soul.
Zen. Alas! too generous prince, the gods long since,
Between us both, fixed their eternal bar.
Ter. What say'st thou, Ariana? ha! beware,
Nor urge me to distraction—love like mine,
Fierce, generous, wild——with disappointment wild,
May rouse my desperate rage to do a deed
Will make all nature shudder. Love despised,
Not always can respect the ties of nature!
Driven to extremes, the tenderest passion scorned,
May hate at length the object it adores,
And stung to madness—no! inhuman fair,
You still must be—in all vicissitudes,
In all the scenes misfortune has in store,
You still must be the sovereign of my soul.
But for the favoured, for the happy rival,
By Heaven, whoe'er he be, despair and phrenzy
May strike the blow, and dash him from your arms,
A sacrifice to violated love.
Zen. Why thus distract yourself with vain suspicions?
You have no rival, whom your rage can murder——
None in the power of fate—Oh! Teribazus,
The wretched Ariana—long, long since——
My heart swells o'er—I cannot speak—a duty,
A rigorous duty bids me ne'er accept
Thy proffered love; a duty, which, if known,
Would in eternal silence seal thy vows,
Turn all thy rage to tears, and, Oh! my prince!
Bid thee respect calamities like mine. [*Exit Ter.*
Ter. Yet, Ariana, stay—turn, turn and hear me—
She's gone, the cruel, unrelenting fair!
And leaves me thus to misery of soul.

Enter ZOPIRON.

Zop. Flamminius from the Romans is arrived,
And bears the olive branch; the king, your father,
Assembles all his nobles——
Ter. Say, Zopiron,
Does Rome yield up Armenia?
Zop. Rome is still
The scourge of lawless power—a people's rights
The conscript fathers have resolved to shield,
And to the lineal heir assert the crown.
Ter. May the stern god of battles aid their arms,
And fight with the deliverers of mankind!
Unnatural father! that would seize my sceptre,
Mine, as my brother's heir, and ravish, with it,
The idol of my soul—but now, no more
His tyranny prevails—to empire raised,
'Twill be the pride of my exulting heart
To lay my crown at Ariana's feet. [*Exit Ter.*
Zop. Unhappy prince! should Pharasmanes know
His ardent passion for the captive maid,
Alas! his fatal rage—propitious powers!
May these events—may Rome's ambassador—
Oh! may he come with concord in his train,
And far avert the ills my heart forebodes!
But lo! Flamminius.——

Enter RHADAMISTUS.

Welcome to these tents,
The harbinger of peace!
Rhad. Does your king know
Flamminius waits his leisure?
Zop. He prepares
To hear you, Roman!
Rhad. As I tread his camp,
There is, I know not what, of horror shoots
Through all my frame, and disconcerted reason
Suspends her function—a black train of crimes,
Murders and lust, and rapine, cities sacked,

Nations laid waste by the destructive sword,
A thousand ruthless deeds all rise to view,
And shake my inmost soul, as I approach
The author of calamity and ruin.
Zop. Then, from a Roman, from a son of freedom,
Let the fell tyrant hear the voice of truth,
The strong resistless strain, which liberty
Breathes in her capitol, till his proud heart
Shudder with inward horror at itself.
Rhad. In Pharasmanes' camp that honest style!
Thy visage bears the characters of virtue.
Wilt thou impart thy name and quality?
Zop. In me you see Zopiron! deem me not
A vile abettor of the tyrant's guilt.
To me Armenia trusts her sacred rights;
Hither her chosen delegate she sends me,
At the tribunal of Iberia's king,
To plead her cause; an injured people's cause!
Oh! never, never shall my native land
Yield to a vile usurper.
Rhad. Rome has heard
Thy patriot toil for freedom—Rhadamistus
Has heard thy generous ardour in his cause,
And pants to recompence thy truth and zeal.
Zop. Oh! name not Rhadamistus——now no more
The god-like youth shall bless Armenia's realm.
The fates just shewed him to the wondering world,
And then, untimely, snatched him from our sight!
Rhad. And did'st thou know the prince?
Zop. My lot severe
Denied that transport; but the voice of fame
Endears his memory.
Rhad. A time may come
When you may meet, and both in friendship burn.
Still Rhadamistus lives!
Zop. Said'st thou, Flamminius!
Lives he?
Rhad. Still he survives; from death and peril
Saved by a miracle! and now for him
Rome claims Armenia.
Zop. Claims Armenia for him!
For Rhadamistus claims! and will ye, gods!
Still will ye give him to a nation's prayers?
Rhad. Alas! he lives; heart-broken, desolate,
In sorrow plunged; abandoned to despair!
Zop. The righteous gods will vindicate his cause.
His loved Zenobia, Mithridates' daughter,
That every excellence—does she, too, live?
Have the indulgent powers watched o'er her fate,
And saved her for her people?
Rhad. There, Zopiron,
There lies the wound that pierces to his soul,
The sharpest pang—that rends—that cleaves his heart.
Oh! never more shall lovely lost Zenobia,
That angel form, that pattern of all goodness,
No, never more—she's gone, for ever gone!
Thou would'st not think——her barbarous, cruel husband—
With his own hand—the recollected tale
Of horror shakes my frame to dissolution!
Her husband!—he!—that dear, that tender form——
Oh!—poor Zenobia—oh!— [*Falls into a swoon.*
Zop. He faints! he falls!
Can Roman stoicism thus dissolve
In tender pity? Rise, Flamminius, rise;
He stirs; he breathes; and life begins to wander
O'er his forsaken cheek. Resume thy strength,
And, like a Roman, triumph o'er your tears.
Rhad. I will not be forced back to a wretched world.
No; let me—let me die.—
Zop. His eyes reject
The cheerful light—what can this anguish mean?
Rhad. You do but waste your pains; it is in vain;
Away! and leave a murderer to his woes.
Zop. Why thus accuse thyself? I'll not believe it—
Thus let me raise thee from the earth—
Rhad. Alas!—[*Rising.*]—
Despair weighs heavy on me.
Zop. Still I must
Controul this sudden phrenzy——
Rhad. Oh! Zopiron,
Here, here it lies——
Zop. Unburden all, and ease
Your loaded heart—it cannot be—thou never wert
A murderer!
Rhad. Yes! the horror of the world!
A murderous wretch! the fatal Rhadamistus!
'Twas I—these felon hands! with treacherous love
I clasped her in this cursed embrace—I bore her
In these detested arms, and gave that beauty,
That tender form, to the devouring waves.
Plunge me, ye furies, in your lakes of fire!
Here fix, fix all your vultures in my heart!
And lo! they rush upon me. [*Starts up.*] See! see there!
With racks and wheels they come; they tear me piece-meal—
'Tis just, Zenobia! I deserve it all——
[*Falls upon Zopiron.*
Zop. Assist him, guardian powers! your own high will
Guides these events—revive, my prince, revive!
Rhad. Why thus recal me to despair and horror?
To bid me hate the light, detest myself,
Traitor to nature, traitor to my love!
And yet, Zopiron, yet I am not plunged
So far in guilt, but thou may'st pity me!
Heaven, I attest, yes, you can witness, gods!
I meant to perish with her—but the fates
Denied that comfort—from her circling arms
The torrent bore me far—expiring, senseless,

Gasping in death, the overflowing tide
Impetuous drove me on the unwished-for shore.
There, soon deserted by the merciless stream,
A band of Romans, as from Syria's frontier
They ranged the country round, descried me, stretched,
Pale and inanimate; with barbarous pity,
They lent their aid, and chained me to the rack
Of inauspicious life!
Zop. For wond'rous ends
Mysterious Providence has still reserved you,
To circulate the happiness of millions,
A patriot prince——
Rhad. Would they had let me perish!
What has a wretch, like me, to do in life,
When my Zenobia's lost? 'tis true, my friend,
She begged to die—but that pathetic look,
Her tears, embraces, and those streaming eyes,
Still beauteous in distress! each winning grace,
Her every charm should have forbid the deed,
And pleaded for her life!
Zop. And yet, my prince,
When self-acquitting conscience——
Rhad. Self-condemned,
My soul is racked, is tortured—not her child,
Her unborn infant, the first fruit of love,
Not even her babe could, with the voice of nature,
Plead for itself, or for its wretched mother.
They perished both; she and her little one,
And I survive to tell it.
Zop. Let not grief
O'erwhelm your reason thus—What! when your father,
Your cruel father, reeking from the blood
Of Mithridates—
Rhad. Nought but death was left;
Yet even that last, sad refuge was debarred me!
E'er since, I've lived in misery; my days
Were coloured all with anguish and despair!
Long from the Romans I concealed my name,
At length revealed me to a chosen friend;
Journeyed with him to Rome; and, in full senate,
Told all the dismal story of my woes.
The conscript fathers heard, and dropt a tear—
Then, to quick vengeance fired, dispatched their legions
To wage the war; Paulinus leads them on,
And now to me commits this embassy,
With fully delegated powers from Rome.
Zop. With one united voice Armenia calls
For Mithridates' heir; convinced by rumour
That thou art lost, the general cry demands
Your brother Teribazus——
Rhad. He, Zophiron,
Is to these eyes a stranger.
Zop. Hapless prince!
A cloud of woes lies brooding o'er his head.
A fair, a lovely captive rules his heart;
Her name is Ariana; and, indeed,
No wonder she attracts his soft regard,
And kindles all the vehemence of love.
The tyrant eyes her, too, with fierce desire,
And ruin nods o'er Teribazus' head.
Rhad. By Heaven it shall not be! Alas! I know
The pang of losing whom the heart adores.
I'll yield him up Armenia—what are crowns
But toys of vain ambition, when the loved,
The dear partaker of my throne is lost?

Enter TIGRANES.

Zop. What would Tigranes?
Tig. Pharasmanes calls
Flamminius to his presence——
Rhad. I attend him;
So tell your king——
Tig. Instant he waits thee, Roman. [*Exit Tig.*
Rhad. How my heart trembles at the awful meeting!
Zop. Then summon all your strength—the lapse of time
From early youth, when Pharasmanes saw you,
Affliction's inward stroke, that Roman garb,
All will protect, and cloak you from detection.
Rhad. Zopiron, yes; in this important crisis,
When violated laws, and injured men,
When my own wrongs are labouring in my heart,
The great occasion calls for firmest vigour.
Yes, in this interview I will maintain
A Roman's part; in Pharasmanes' soul
I'll wake the furies of detested guilt,
And pour the rapid energy of truth,
Till even to himself his crimes are known,
And the usurper tremble on his throne.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—PHARASMANES *on his throne;* TIGRANES, ZOPIRON, *Officers, &c.*

Phar. WHERE is this bold republican from Rome?
This enemy of kings? Tigranes, thou
Bid the plebeian enter———Pharasmanes
Vouchsafes him audience.

Enter FLAMMINIUS.

Phar. Now, Flamminius, say,
What motive brings you to Araxes' banks,
To wage this slow, this philosophic war?
Rhad. By me, unworthy of the important charge,
By me, unequal to the arduous theme,

The conscript fathers here explain their conduct,
And justify the ways of Rome to kings.
Phar. Roman, thou may'st declaim with all thy pomp
Of idle eloquence.
Rhad. No power of words,
No graceful periods of harmonious speech
Dwell on my lip—the only art I boast
Is honest truth, unpolished, unadorned:
Truth, that informs you, to usurp a crown,
For dire ambition to unpeople realms,
Are violations of each sacred law,
And bid the Roman eagle, winged with vengeance,
To the Araxes' margin bend her flight,
To tell destruction it shall rage no more.
Phar. And dares Paulinus' soldier, darest thou, slave,
Thus offer vile indignity, and mouth
The language of your forum to a king?
Rhad. Rome knows, and owns you as Iberia's king,
But not Armenia's.
Phar. Ha!
Rhad. The assembled senate
Acknowledges your vast renown in arms,
And honours the unshaken fortitude
Even of a foe—but, sir, the fortitude,
Whose brutal rage lays nations desolate,
It is the glory of imperial Rome
To humble and subdue—it is the glory
Of Rome, that spares the vanquished, 'tis her pride
To set the nations free; to fix the bounds
Of the fell tyrant's power; to trace the circle
From which he must not move. These are the arts,
The bright prerogative of Rome—of Rome,
The mistress of the world, whose conquering banners
O'er Asia's realms so oft have waved in triumph,
And made even kings her subjects——
Phar. Ha! vain boaster!
Rhad. Made oriental kings, short by the knee
Accept their crown, with tears of joy accept it,
And be the viceroys of a Roman senate.
Phar. And this to Pharasmanes? has not yet
A train of conquests taught you to revere
This good right arm in war? This arm the Parthians
Have felt with fatal overthrow—no spoil,
No trophies won from me have graced their triumphs;
No friends of mine were harnessed to their chariots;
No captive chief, like your own mangled Crassus,
There roams a sullen ghost, and calls for vengeance,
For vengeance still unpaid, and calls in vain
For the sad funeral rites. Would Rome presume
To wrest Armenia from me—lo! my banners,
From frosty Caucasus to Phasis' banks,
Wave high in air, and shadow all the land.
Call your embattled legions—or does Rome,
All-conquering Rome, that mistress of the world,
Does she at length, by her ambassadors,
Negotiate thus the war?
Rhad. Rome, sir, commands
The subject world, for she adores the gods,
And their all-powerful aid.
Phar. Would'st thou dispute
My lawful claim,—arm thee with sword and fire,
Not with vain subtleties and idle maxims.
Armenia's crown is mine,—derived to me,
Heir to a brother, and a son deceased.
Rhad. And can a murderer, can the midnight ruffian
Prove himself heir—by the assassin's stab?
Phar. Thou base reviler!
[*Comes forward, and draws his sabre.*
Tig. Moderate your fury. [*holding him.*]
It were unjust—
Zop. The character he bears——
The laws of nations——
Phar. Thou base insolent!
Who dar'st to wound the ear of sacred kings
With a black crime, that's horrible to nature!
Rhad. Yes, horrible to nature!—yet the world
Has heard it all—thou art the man of blood!
A brother's blood yet smokes upon thy hand—
Not his white age, his venerable looks,
Not even his godlike virtues could withhold thee!
Gashed o'er with wounds, he falls,—he bleeds, he dies.
Without a groan he dies!—that is thy work;
Thine, murderer! thine!
Phar. No more—the hand of heaven
Shook from the blasted tree the withered fruit.
Rhad. Forbear the impious strain—it is the stile
Ambition speaks, when for a crown it stabs,
Then dares, with execrable mockery, dares
Traduce the governing, all-righteous mind.
Phar. He harrows up my soul!—and dost thou think
A madman's ravings——
Rhad. Since that hour accursed
Hast thou not plunged thee deeper still in guilt?
Your son—your blameless son———
Phar. His crimes provoked
A father's wrath—his and Zenobia's crimes!
Rhad. She too—untimely lost—unbidden tears,
Forbear to stream, nor quite unman me thus!
Phar. In tears!—by Heaven, thou woman-hearted slave,
Those coward symptoms have some latent spring
That lies concealed within that treacherous heart.
Rhad. They are the tears humanity lets fall,
When soft-eyed beauty dies, untimely slain.
But to avenge her death, arrayed in terror,
The Roman legions——
Phar. Lead them to the charge.
Thou, quit my camp: If, when yon sun descends

Thou lingerest here, the title of ambassador
Shall nought avail to save thee from my fury.
Rhad. E'er that, resign Armenia. Till the close
Of day, I give thee leisure to revolve
The vengeance Rome prepares—Thou know'st
With what a ponderous arm her hardy sons
Lift the avenging spear. Be timely wise,
Nor dare provoke your fate. [*Exit Rhad.*
Phar. Roman, farewell!
Do thou, Tigranes, issue forth my orders
From tent to tent, that each man stand prepared
For the dead midnight hour—with silent march
Then will I pour, with ruinous assault,
Upon the astonished foe; my horses hoofs
Imbrue in blood, and give to-morrow's sun
A spectacle of horror and destruction.
[*He ascends his throne, and the back scene closes.*

SCENE II.

Enter ZENOBIA *and* MEGISTUS.

Zen. Oh! tell me all, Megistus; let me hear
All that concerns my child, my blooming boy,
My little Rhadamistus—is he safe?
Give me the truth—do not deceive a mother,
Who doats upon her babe—is my child safe?
Meg. Dry up your tears—I cannot bear to see you
Afflicted thus—your infant hero's safe—
You may believe your faithful, old Megistus——
Zen. I do believe thee; but excuse my weakness.
My fluttering fears for ever paint him to me
By ruffians seized, and, as he sees the knife
Aimed at his little throat, in vain imploring
For me, by name, and begging my assistance,
While far, far off, his miserable mother
No aid can give, nor snatch him to her heart.
Meg. I never yet deceived you——by yon heaven
The prince still lives—when I regained my cottage,
After the toils of many a weary day,
I found him there—but grieved, and wondering much
Where his dear mother was.
Zen. Megistus, tell me,
Oh! tell me each particular; his looks,
All his apt questions, his enchanting words;
For I could hear of him for ever—lovely youth!
His father's image blooming in his boy!
Through seven revolving years my only comfort!
When from my eyes the sudden sorrows gushed,
How would he look, and ask his wretched mother
What meant those falling tears?——alas! even now
I see him here before me—did my child
Think his poor mother lost?
Meg. At first he seemed
To pine in thought at your long, weary absence,
And many a look he cast, that plainly spoke
His little bosom heaved with various passions.
Still would he seek you in each well-known haunt,
Each bower, each cavern, like the tender fawn,
That through the woodland seeks its mother lost,
Exploring all around with anxious eye,
And looking still unutterable grief,
Lonely and sad, and stung with keen regret.
Zen. Did my child weep?—not much, I hope——
Meg. With soothing tales
I laboured to beguile him from his sorrow;
I promised your return; a gentle smile
Brightened his anxious look; he sighed content,
And then I led him to a safer dwelling,
Among the shepherds of the Syrian vale,
Who all have sworn to guard him as their own,
And in due season lead him to the Romans.
Zen. Oh, may those shepherds know the kindest influence
Of the indulgent heavens! Yet, why not stay
To guard him? but I'll not complain; on me
Your cares were fixed. Oh! tell me how the gods
Watched over all thy ways, and brought thee to me!
Where hast thou lived these many, many days?
Meg. In bitterness of soul I've lived, thy fate,
Thy tender form deep imaged in my breast!
I ranged the banks where the Araxes flows,
But bring, alas! no tidings of your lord.
Heart-broken, wearied out, I measured back
My feeble steps, but thou wert ravished thence!
For thee, I traversed hills and forests drear;
Thee I invoked, that every caverned rock,
Each vale, each mountain echoed with thy name.
Zen. And here at length you find me; here, encompassed
With all the worst of ills; hence let us fly
To the blessed Syrian valley, where my child
Wins with his early manhood every heart,
And calls for me, and chides this long delay.
Meg. Vain the attempt; one only way is left:
Reveal thee to the ambassador of Rome.
Safe in his train, thou may'st escape this place,
And gain Paulinus' camp; Zenobia, known,
Will meet protection there.
Zen. The gods inspire
The happy counsel. Ha! Tigranes comes!
Retire, Megistus. [*He goes out.*] A gay dawn of hope
Beams forth at length, and lights up day within me.
Tig. Hail princess, destined to imperial sway,
To grace with beauty Pharasmanes' throne!
By me, the impatient king requests you'll fix
The happy nuptial hour.
Zen. Thou might'st as well
Command me wed the forked lightning's blaze,
That gilds the storm, and be in love with horror.
Tig. Take heed, rash fair! an eastern monarch's love,
Ardent as his, must not be made the sport

Of tyrant beauty. When a rival dares
Oppose his sovereign's wish——
Zen. Does Pharasmanes,
Say, does your king permit his spies of state,
That curse of human kind, to breathe their whispers
In his deluded ear?
Tig. Full well 'tis known
That Teribazus bids you thus revolt,
And draws your heart's allegiance from your king.
Zen. Thou vile accuser!—if the prince's virtues
Have touched my bosom, what hast thou to urge?
What if a former hymeneal vow
Has bound my soul?—what if a father, sir,
A father, dear as my heart's purple drops,
Enjoin a rigid duty ne'er to share
The throne of Mithridates with a murderer?
Tig. Madam, those words——
Zen. Thou instrument of ill!
Who still art ready with a tale suborned,
And if thou art not perjured, dar'st betray;—
Away, and let thy conscience tell the rest. [*Exit.*
Tig. Vain haughty fair!—thou hast provoked my rage
By wrongs unnumbered; but for all those wrongs,
Soon shall inevitable ruin seize thee.

Enter RHADAMISTUS.

Rhad. Perhaps, ere this, your king's tumultuous passions
Sink to a calm, and reason takes her turn.
Then seek him, sir, and bear a Roman's message,
The terms of peace humanity suggests.
Tell him, Flamminius wishes to prevent
The rage of slaughter, and the streams of blood,
Which else shall deluge yonder crimson plains.
Tig. Already, Roman, his resolve is fixed.
War, horrid war impends.
Rhad. And yet, in pity
To human kind, to the unhappy millions
Who soon shall die, and with their scattered bones,
Whiten the plains of Asia; it were best
To sheathe the sword, and join in Rome's alliance.
Wilt thou convey my message?
Tig. I obey. [*Exit.*
Rhad. May some propitious power inspire his heart,
And touch the springs of human kindness in him.
Else, against whom, amidst the charging hosts,
Must Rhadamistus' sword be levelled?—ha!—
Spite of his crimes, he is my father still;
And must this arm, against the source of life,
Nay, more, perhaps against a brother too—
A brother still unknown!—he, too, may die
By this unconscious hand!—this hand, already
Inured to murder whom my heart adores!
My brother, then, may bleed! and when in death,
Gasping he lies, and pours his vital stream,
Then, in that moment, shall the generous youth
Extend his arms, and, with a piteous look,
Tell me, a brother doth forgive his murderer!
Gods! you have doomed me to the blackest woe,
To be a wretch abhorred, author of crimes
From which my tortured breast revolts with horror!—
Who's there?—A youth comes forward.—Now be firm,
Be firm my heart, and guard thy fatal secret!

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Illustrious Roman, if misfortune's son,
A wretched, ruined, miserable prince,
May claim attention.
Rhad. Ha, can this be he!
The graces of his youth, each feeling here,
Here, at my heartstrings, tell me 'tis my brother!
[*Aside.*
Ter. I see you are moved, and I intrude too far.
Rhad. Pursue your purpose; warmest friendship for you
Glows in this breast.
Ter. Though Pharasmanes' fury
Maintains a fixed hostility with Rome,
Blend not the son with all a father's crimes.
Rhad. Go on; I pant to hear.
Ter. My father's cruelty
Each day breaks out in some new act of horror,
Nor lets the sword grow cool from human blood.
First, in his brother's breast he plunged it; then,
Inflamed to fiercer rage, 'gainst his own son.
Oh, Rhadamistus! thou much injured prince!
Rhad. And didst thou love that brother?
Ter. Generous Roman,
He lived far hence remote; I ne'er beheld him,
But the wide world resounded with his fame.
Rhad. Hold, hold my tears!—Oh! they will burst their way
At this his virtuous tenderness and love! [*Aside.*
Ter. And dost thou weep too, Roman?
Rhad. From such horror,
And so much cruelty, my nature shrinks.
Whatever purpose rolls within thy breast,
Boldly confide it. Shall I, armed with vengeance,
Assault the purple tyrant in his camp?
Or wilt thou join my steps? then, in the front
Of a brave veteran legion, head the war,
Seek the usurper 'midst his plumed troops,
And thus avenge mankind?
Ter. No; far from me,
Far be the guilt of meditating aught
Against the life from whence my being sprung.
Let him oppress me,—he's a parent still!
Rhad. He rives my heart! Oh! what a lot is mine! [*Aside.*
Ter. Not for myself I fear; but oh! Flamminius,
A lovely captive,—'tis for her I tremble;
For Ariana, for that sweet perfection;
She is her sex's boast!—her gentle bosom
Fraught with each excellence!—her form and feature

†

Touched by the hand of elegance; adorned
By every grace, and cast in beauty's mould!
Her, Pharasmanes means to ravish from me.
But thou convey her hence—'tis all I ask.
Rhad. By Heaven I will!—do thou, too, join our flight;
Armenia shall be thine, and that sweet maid
Reward thy goodness with connubial love,
Adorn thy throne, and make a nation blessed!
Ter. Make Ariana happy! bear her hence,
And save those bright unviolated charms
From Pharasmanes' power! When wished-for peace
Settles a jarring world, Flamminius, then,
Then will I seek thee. Wilt thou then resign her?
Rhad. Yes, then; as pure as the unsullied snow,
That never felt a sunbeam; then I'll give her
Back to thy faithful love.
Ter. Thou generous Roman!
In gratitude I bow—she's here at hand;
A moment brings her to you, while at distance
I watch each avenue, each winding path,
That none intrude upon your privacy. [*Exit.*
Rhad. At length I've seen my brother; know how much
He differs from his father: he shall seek
The Roman tents; I'll there disclose myself;
There will embrace him with a brother's love.
Oh! how the tender transport heaves and swells,
Till, thus, the fond excess dissolves in tears!

Enter MEGISTUS, *leading* ZENOBIA.

Zen. Alas! my heart forebodes I know not what.
Meg. Dispel each doubt—this is your only refuge.
Zen. Thou generous Roman—if distress like mine—
If an unhappy captive may approach thee——
Rhad. To me affliction's voice—ye powers of Heaven!
That air! those features! that remembered glance!
Zen. If thus a wretch's presence can alarm you——
Rhad. The music of that voice! such once she looked!
And if I had not plunged her in the stream,
I could persuade myself——
Zen. Those well known accents!
Those tender soft regards!—nay, mock me not!—
I could not hope to see thee! tell me, art thou
That once adored!—oh!
[*Faints into Megistus' arms.*
Meg. Ah! her strength forsakes her—
Support her, Heaven!—[*Catches her in his arms.*
Rhad. Ye wonder-working gods!
Is this illusion all? or does your goodness
Indeed restore her?—if I do not dream,
If this be true,—oh! let those angel eyes
Open to life, to love, and Rhadamistus.

Meg. What further miracles doth Heaven prepare?
Zen. Forgive my weakness—the air-painted image
Of my loved lord—and see!—again 'tis present!—
That look, that speaks the fond impassioned soul!
Yes, such he was!—oh! art thou—tell me—say—
Art thou restored me?—art thou Rhadamistus?
Rhad. I have not murdered her!—benignant gods!
I am not guilty—my Zenobia lives!
Zen. It is my lord! Oh! I can hold no longer,
But, thus delighted, spring to his embrace,
Thus wander o'er him with my tears and kisses,
And thus, and thus,—speak my enraptured soul.
Rhad. She lives! she lives! what kind protecting god,
Long lost, and long lamented, gives thee back,
Gives me to view thee, and to hear thy voice,
With joy to ecstacy, with tears to rapture?
Zen. This good old man—'twas he preserved me for you.
Meg. Oh! day of charms! Oh! unexpected hour!
I have not lived in vain—these gushing eyes
Have seen their mutual transports!
Rhad. Generous friend!
Come to my heart—Zenobia's second father!
Zen. Thou art indebted more than thou can'st pay him;
Indebted for our infant babe preserved,
The blossom of our joys! thou can'st not think
How much he looks, and moves, and talks like thee.
Rhad. Oh! mighty gods! it is too much of bliss,
Too exquisite to bear! these barbarous hands
Had well nigh murdered both my wife and child!
Wilt thou forgive me! Oh! my best delight,
Wilt thou receive a traitor to your arms?
Wilt thou, Zenobia?
Zen. Will I? gracious Heaven!
Thou source of all my comfort!
Meg. Ha! beware,
Beware my prince! but now with hasty step
I saw Tigranes circling yonder tent.
Rhad. The ambassador of Rome he seeks, on business
Of import high—I will prevent his speed—
And must I, then, so soon depart, Zenobia?
Zen. Hence, quickly hence! anon we'll meet again—
Rhad. Yes, we will meet; the gods have given thee to me,
And they will finish their own holy work. [*Exit.*
Meg. My prayers are heard at length—Zenobia still
Shall be Armenia's queen.
Zen. Oh! good Megistus,
Heaven has been bounteous, and restored my lord.

With him I'll fly, wrapt in the gloom of night;
And thou, Megistus, thou shalt join our flight;
Placed near his throne, thy generous zeal shall share
The bright reward of all thy toil and care;
While I, redeemed at length from fierce alarms,
Forget my woes in Rhadamistus' arms. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter RHADAMISTUS *and* TERIBAZUS.

Ter. THOU art a friend indeed, thou generous man!
The best of friends, to save such innocence,
That lovely virgin bloom! the pious act
Shall to remotest time transmit thy name,
Ennobled by humanity and virtue.
Rhad. Alas! no praise I merit; 'tis a deed
That loses virtue's name—
Ter. Flamminius, no!
Thou shalt not derogate from worth like thine.
But oh! beware, my friend, and steel thy heart
Against the sweet illapse of gentler passions.
To love her were such treachery! By Heaven!
It were a fraud of a more damned hue—
A fraud to sacred friendship! but my soul
Rejects the mean suspicion—thou art just,
And Ariana shall be mine again!
Rhad. If, when the tumult of the war is passed,
You then persist to claim her——
Ter. Then persist!
When I do not persist—whene'er my heart
Forgets the fond idea—ha! take heed—
Your colour dies by fits, and now, again,
It flushes o'er your cheek—if beauty's power
Can waken soft desire—and sure such beauty
May warm the breast of stoic apathy—
If thou can'st love, resign the trust at once.
For Oh! to lose her, to behold those charms,
That all-perfection yielded to another,
Were the worst agony, the keenest stab
That ever pierced a lover to the soul.
The thought, the very thought inflames to madness!
Rhad. [*Aside.*] Not till the fever of his mind subsides,
Must I reveal me—the disclosure, now,
Would to his phrenzy give a whirlwind's wing,
And bury all in ruin—let her, then,
Yes, Teribazus, let the blooming maid,
Still in this camp, a voluntary captive—
Since you will have it so—since weak mistrust
Can taint a noble spirit—let her here
Teach that rare beauty to display its charms,
Its various graces; bid those radiant eyes
Dart their quick glances to the tyrant's soul,
Inflame his hot desires, and half absolve them.
Ter. Madness and horror! no! haste, fly, begone,
And give her hence safe conduct; I can trust
To Roman continence—your Scipio's praise
Shall be the theme of fame's eternal lip!
Rhad. Thou, too, attend her steps; watch all her ways;
When we have reached the Roman sanctuary,
Then shall such wonders to thy listening ear—
The web which fate has wove——beware my friend—
Tigranes comes—what would'st thou, sir?

Enter TIGRANES.

Tig. The king
Grants you one parley more——even now, this way
He bends his steps——remote from all, he means
To hold a private conference——
Rhad. Rome's ambassador
Attends his pleasure. [*Exit Tigranes.*
Ter. I must hence, Flamminius——
Farewell! yet, ere thou goest, I still must crave
Another interview—farewell! remember,
My love, my life, my all, depend on thee. [*Exit.*
Rhad. Ah! luckless prince! how lost in error's maze!
Blindly he wanders, and love's sweet delusion
Infuses its enchantment through his heart!
But when removed from Pharasmanes' power,
He learns my prior claim, his generous friendship
Will bound with transport at a brother's joys,
And with a warmth of sympathy partake them.
But ha! My father! Grant me strength, ye powers,
To meet the dread encounter!

Enter PHARASMANES.

Phar. Once again,
Ere you depart, if Pharasmanes deign
To treat, and thus expostulate with Rome,
'Tis to thy prayers I grant it.
Rhad. Rome had rather
Persuade than conquer; her well-balanced justice—
Phar. No more of Roman justice——blazon not
Virtues you ne'er have practised——with the name,
The specious name of love for human kind,
You sanctify the insatiate rage of conquest,
And where the sword has made a solitude,
That you proclaim a peace. Even now your views
Stand manifest to sight—to thee 'tis known
That Rhadamistus lives!

Rhad. How, Sir! can he—
Does that unhappy prince—
Phar. Thou false dissembler!—
Yes, in thy heart the fatal secret's lodged!
Rhad. Sir, if your son—if you will search his heart—
Phar. From certain fugitives I have learned it all—
In yonder camp, conceal'd from vulgar eyes,
To war against his father still he lives!
Why dost thou droop dejected? something lurks
Beneath that burning blush—
Rhad. That burning blush
Glows on my cheek for thee—I know your son,
And know him unsusceptible of guilt.
Phar. Then, Roman, mark my words; would'st thou prevent
The carnage fate prepares on yonder plains,
Go, tell Paulinus I will treat of terms
With him, who brings me Rhadamistus' head.
Rhad. Your own son's head!
Phar. Why dost thou gaze so earnest?
Why those emotions struggling for a vent?
Rhad. Amazement checks my voice, and, lost in wonder,
I view the unnatural father, who would bathe
His hands in blood, in a son's blood—a son
Who pants, with ardour pants, on terms of peace,
To sheathe the sword, and with a filial hand
To throw a veil over a father's crimes.
Phar. By Heaven 'tis false—has he not dared to league
With my determined foes? even to the senate,
To every region where his voice could pierce,
Has he not fled with the delusive story?
With grief and loud complaints inflamed the world?
And even now, does not the stripling come
To the Araxes' banks with Rome in arms?
Rhad. Though urged by dire constraint, yet Heaven can witness
His strong reluctance.
Phar. Let the rebel know
He never shall ascend Armenia's throne.
Rhad. And shall destruction, with her horrid train,
Stalk o'er the land?
Phar. Yes! let destruction loose!
'Tis Pharasmanes' glory.
Rhad. Can the rage,
And the wild tumult of destructive havoc
Administer delight? alas! the day
That deluges the land with human blood,
Is that a day of glory?——
I, sir, have traversed o'er the field of death,
Where war had spent its rage. Had'st thou beheld
That scene of horror, where unnumbered wretches,
In mangled heaps, lay weltering in their gore;
Where the fond father, in the gasp of death,
Wept for his children; where the lover sighed
For her, whom never more his eyes should view;
Where various misery sent forth its groans:
Had'st thou beheld that scene, the touch of nature
Had stirred within thee, and the virtuous drop
Of pity gushed unbidden from thy eye.
Phar. Enervate slave! here ends all further parley.
Go tell your general, tell your Roman chiefs,
The father claims his son.—Have we not heard
How your own Brutus to the lictor's sword
Condemned his children? and would Rome dispute
A king's paternal power? let them yield up
The treacherous boy, or, terrible in arms,
Shall Pharasmanes overwhelm their legions,
Mow down their cohorts, and their mangled limbs
Give to the vulture's beak.
Rhad. And yet reflect—
Phar. Roman, no more.
Rhad. Unwilling, I withdraw;
A father's stern resolve the son shall mourn,
And with a pang of nature shall behold
The Roman eagle dart like thunder on thee.
[*Exit.*
Phar. Away, and leave me, slave! to-morrow's sun
Shall see my great revenge—mean time, I give
The gentle hours to love and Ariana.
What, ho! Tigranes!

Enter TIGRANES.

Phar. Does the subborn fair
Yield to my ardent vows?
Tig. She mocks your passion,
And gives to Teribazus all her smiles.
Phar. By Heaven! even love itself shall be my slave!
Yet love like mine requires her soft consent,
And will not riot o'er her plundered charms.
Quick, bring her father to me————
Tig. By your orders
At hand Megistus waits your sovereign will.
[*Exit.*
Phar. Bring him before us—wise and prudent age
Will plead my cause, and second my desires.

Enter MEGISTUS.

Meg. Dread sir—a blameless, a distressed old man,
Of guilt unconscious——
Phar. Whatsoe'er thy guilt,
A smile from Ariana expiates all.
Meg. Believe me, sir, I never have offended;
She was my sole delight; my age's comfort;
For her I felt more than a parent's love——
But 'midst the troubles that distract the land
I lost her. In despair, with yearning heart,
I ranged the country round in fond pursuit.
This is my crime; sure 'tis no crime to love
Such blooming innocence!

Phar. Dispel thy fears,
Thy love for Ariana speaks thy virtue.
That graceful form, that symmetry of shape,
That bloom, those features, those love-darting eyes,
All, all attract, that there each fond admirer
Could ever gaze, enamoured of her charms.
Meg. Alas! whate'er the symmetry of shape,
Whate'er the grace that revels in her features,
Glows in her bloom, or sparkles in her eye,
They all are transient beauties, soon to fade,
And leave inanimate that decent form.
Inward affliction saps the vital frame,
Incurable affliction! fixed in woe
Her eyes for ever, motionless and dim,
Gaze on the fancied image of her husband.
Phar. Her husband!
Meg. Yes; a husband severed from her
By fatal chance! him she for ever sees
With fancy's gushing eye, and seeks him still
In fond excursions of delusive thought.
She pines each hour, and even in blooming dies;
As drooping roses, while the worm, unseen,
Preys on their fragrant sweets, still beauteous look,
And waste their aromatic lives in air.
Phar. The rose, transplanted to a warmer sky,
Shall raise its languid head, and all be well.
Meg. Her husband still survives, and far remote
He wanders in Armenia's realm——
Phar. No more
To call her his! by all my promised joys,
His doom is fixed! do thou straight seek thy daughter,
My loveliest Ariana; in her ear
Breathe the mild accents of a father's voice,
And reconcile her heart to love and me.
Meg. Your pardon, sir; it were not fit my voice
Should teach her to betray her holy vows.
Phar. When Pharasmanes speaks—
Meg. My life is his,
And when he wills it, 'tis devoted to him——
But, sir, though poor, my honour still is mine;
'Tis all that Heaven has given me, and that gift
The gods expect I never should resign.
Phar. And dost thou hesitate? what, when a crown
Invites thy daughter to imperial splendour!
Meg. Oh! not for me such splendour! I have lived
My humble days in virtuous poverty.
To tend my flock, to watch each rising flower,
Each herb, each plant that drinks the morning dew,
And lift my praise to the just gods on high—
These were my habits, these my only cares;
These hands sufficed to answer my desires,
And having nought, yet nought was wanting to me.
Phar. Away, thou slave! I would not quite despise thee——
Or yield your daughter, or my swiftest vengeance
Falls on thy hoary head—a monarch's love
Shall seize her trembling to his eager arms,
Then spurn her back a prey to wan despair,
Till bitter anguish blast each withered charm,
And rave in vain for love and empire scorned!
[*Exit.*
Meg. Fell monster, go! inexorable tyrant!
Perhaps I should have soothed his lion rage
With feigned compliance—ha!—why sudden thus——

Enter ZENOBIA.

Zen. The important hour, Megistus, now approaches.
Lo! the last blushes of departing day
But feebly streak yon dim horizon's verge.
My Rhadamistus comes to guide my steps——
Through devious paths seek thou Zopiron's tent;
Thus we shall lull suspicion.
Meg. I obey;
May guardian angels spread their wings around thee! [*Exit.*
Zen. Yes, the blessed gods, who, through the maze of fate,
Have led us once again to meet in life,
Will prove the friends of virtue to the last.
Ha! Teribazus comes!

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. And is it given
Once more to see thee here? dost thou avoid me?
Dost thou despise me in this tender moment,
When my soul bleeds with anguish at the thought
Of parting with thee? Ariana!
Zen. Oh!
Unhappy prince! Oh! fly me; shun me; death
And ruin follow—one short moment's stay
Will rouze your father's rage.
Ter. My father's rage
Already has undone me—ah! in tears!
And do they fall for me? does that soft sigh
Heave for the lost, afflicted Teribazus?
Zen. Yes, the tear falls, and the sigh heaves, for thee;
Thy elegance of mind, the various graces
That bloom around thee, and adorn the hero,
Nay, other ties there are which strongly plead,
And bid me tremble for thee.
And yet—sad recompense for all thy friendship,
To warn thee hence, to bid thee shun my ways,
Is all the gratitude I now can offer.
Ter. Thus must we part?
Zen. A rival is at hand,
Here in the camp—an unexpected rival,
Sent by the gods—the idol of my soul!
Ter. What say'st thou, Ariana? has another
Usurped thy heart? Unkind, relentless maid!
Since first thy beauty dawned upon my sight,
How have I loved, repented, yet loved on!
Even against you, against myself I struggled—
Present I fled you—absent I adored—

I fled for refuge to the forest's gloom,
But in the forest's gloom thy image met me!
The shades of night, the lustre of the day,
All, all retraced my Ariana's form.
Thy form pursued me in the battle's rage,
'Midst shouts, and all the clangor of the war.
It stole me from myself!– my lonely tent
Re-echoes with my groans, and in the ranks
The wondering soldier hears my voice no more.

Zen. Yet leave me, Teribazus—generous youth!
Remembrance oft shall dwell upon thy praise;
But, for my love, 'tis all another's claim.

Ter. Another's claim! why wilt thou torture thus
A fond, despairing wretch?—oh! not for me
Those sorrows fall—they are another's tears;—
Another claims them from me—name this rival,
That my swift fury—tell me, has Flamminius,
Has the base Roman broke his promised faith?
Will not the barbarous man afford you shelter?

Zen. Why wilt thou force me speak? the fate of all,
Thine, Teribazus—mine—the fate of one,
Whom, were he known—thy heart holds ever dear,
Is now concerned—Flamminius claims my love;
Long since he won my heart——

Ter. Vindictive gods!
Flamminius claims thy love! not Cæsar's self
Shall dare to wrest thee from me—Ariana!
Thus on my knees—would I could perish here,
That even in death I still might gaze upon thee,
Till the last pang divide thee from my heart.

Enter RHADAMISTUS.

Rhad. It was the voice of anguish and despair!
Why thus, illustrious prince——

Ter. [*Starting up.*] Thou treacherous Roman!
Who com'st to violate each sacred tie,
The laws of honour, and the laws of love!
Who com'st beneath the mask of public faith
To do a robber's work!

Rhad. When to your camp
I bring a heart that longs to serve you, prince,
Why this intemperate rage?

Ter. To do the work
Of perfidy and fraud! but first by rapine,
By violated maids, your city grew;
And do you come to emulate your sires,
Unwilling to degenerate in vice?

Rhad. Mistaken youth!—Oh! if you did but know me!
If you but knew the justice Rome intends—

Ter. Justice and Rome! and dost thou dare to join
Two names so opposite?—have we not heard
Of frugal consuls, and of stoic chiefs,
Who soon forgetting here their Sabine farms,
Made war a trade, and then returned to Rome,
Rich with the plunder of the rifled east?
Again some new Lucullus leads them on,
Fired with the love of rapine.

Rhad. Fired with zeal
To break a nation's chains—would'st thou but hear me—
It is a friend implores—

Zen. A generous friend!
Then listen to him—let these streaming eyes,
These earnest prayers, this supplicating form—

Ter. Leagued with my foe, behold her!—— mighty gods!
Have I deserved it of her?

Rhad. Yet be calm——
Yet listen to me—Oh! I could unfold——
Yet stay—I'll prove myself a brother to thee.

Ter. Roman, expect me in the battle's front—
Instant depart—but leave thy prey behind;—
Dare not—I charge thee dare not, tempt her; hence!
To-morrow's sun shall see me, clothed in terror,
Pursue thy steps through all the ranks of war,
Till my spear fix thee quivering to the ground.
[*Exit.*

Zen. Yet, Rhadamistus, call him—let him know——

Rhad. Thou lovely trembler! banish every fear——
The time now bids us hence—and lo! the moon
Streams her mild radiance on the rustling grove.
I will conduct thee—ha! Zopiron——

Enter ZOPIRON.

Come,
Thou best of men! let me once more embrace thee.

Zop. Oh! speed thee hence—each moment's big with death——

Rhad. Farewell! farewell! when I've escaped your camp,
Seek thou my brother; soothe his troubled spirit;
Explain these wonders; tell him Rhadamistus
Esteems and loves, and honours all his virtues.
Farewell, Zopiron!—in Armenia's court
Thy king shall thank thy goodness—my Zenobia,
Oh! let me guide thee from this place of danger,
To life, to love, to liberty and joy,
[*Exit with Zenobia.*

Zop. Lo! the heavens smile with gentlest aspect on them!—
This calm serene, that every planet sheds,
To light their steps—this glad ætherial mildness,
Is sure the token of encircling gods,
That hover anxious o'er the solemn scene!

Enter PHARASMANES, TIGRANES *following.*

Phar. Let Teribazus straight attend our presence——

Tig. But now, with glaring eye and fierce demeanour,
He entered yonder tent——

Phar. Bid him approach us.
Then do thou round the midnight watch, and see
That Rome's ambassador has left my camp.
[*Exit Tigranes*
This war, Zopiron, shall be soon extinguished

In Roman blood, and yield Armenia to me.
Zop. Armenia, sir, still obstinately mourns
Lost Mithridates, father of his people.
Her hardy sons, with one consenting voice,
Demand a king from Rome; all leagued and sworn
Never to crouch beneath the conqueror's yoke.
Phar. But, when the Roman eagle bites the ground,
They'll shrink aghast, and own my sovereign sway.

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Phar. Thou base confederate with thy father's foes!
Ter. The accusation, sir, if proof support it,
Gives you my forfeit life, and I resign it,
Freely resign—if destitute of proof,
It is a stab to honour, and the charge
Should not be lightly urged.
Phar. This arrogance
That dictates to a father——
Ter. 'Tis the spirit
Of injured innocence—if Pharasmanes
Suspect my truth, send me where danger calls;
Bid me this moment carry death and slaughter
To rage in yonder camp; yes, then, your son
Shall mark his hatred of the Roman name.
Phar. Hast thou not dared to thwart my tenderest passion,
And to seduce my Ariana's love?
Ter. And, if this youthful heart, too prone to melt
At beauty's ray, received the gentle flame,
'Tis past—the charm is o'er—no longer now
I walk a captive in her haughty triumph!
In vain she now may call forth all her graces,
Instruct her eyes to roll with bidden fires,
And practise all the wonders of her face.
Ambition calls, and lights a nobler flame.

Enter TIGRANES.

Tig. The ambassador of Rome, and that old traitor,
The false Megistus——
Phar. Speak; unfold thy purpose.
Tig. Together left the camp, and in their train
Bear Ariana with them——
Ter. Ariana!
Have the slaves dared—detested treachery!
Now, now, my father, now approve my zeal!
Phar. Haste! fly! pursue her! bring the traitress back!
Ter. My rapid vengeance shall o'ertake their flight,
And bring the Roman plunderer bound in chains.
[*Exit.*
Phar. Do thou, Tigranes, with a chosen band
Circle yon hills, and intercept their march.
And thou, Zopiron, send my swiftest horse
To range the wood, and sweep along the vale.
[*Exit Tigranes.*
Zop. Ye guardian deities, now lend your aid!
[*Exit.*
Phar. [*Alone.*] Has the perfidious, yet adored deceiver,
Thus has she left me? from a monarch's smile,
Fled with a lawless ravager from Rome?
Oh! give me vengeance; give Flamminius to me,
That he may die in agony unheard of.
The traitress, then—spite of each winning art,
Spite of her guilt, she triumphs in my heart.

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter PHARASMANES.

Phar. Not yet returned! I am tortured on the rack—
By Heaven, to-morrow's dawn——distracting thought!
Ere that, the Roman ravager enjoys
Her heaven of bliss, and riots in delight.
My soul's on fire—this night I'll storm his camp,
And dash his promised joys; let loose my rage,
[*A flourish of trumpets.*
And bury all in ruin—ha! what means
This new alarm?

Enter TERIBAZUS, *Soldiers, &c.*

Ter. The treacherous slave is taken!
My speed outstripped him, and this arm, that seized,
Hath well secured the traitor.
Phar. Great revenge,
The measure of thy joys is full!
Ter. At first
They made a feeble stand; but, hemmed around,
And close encircled by the sons of Asia,
They saw death threatening at each javelin's point.
I rushed upon Flamminius—much he courted
A secret parley, but my soul disdained
All further conference—he and his complotter,
The base Megistus, with the fair deserter,
Remeasure back their steps, and clank their chains
In bitterness of heart.
Phar. A father's thanks,
Shall well requite thee—lo! the traitors come.

Enter RHADAMISTUS, ZENOBIA, MEGISTUS, *in chains.*

Phar. Thou base perfidious! thou Italian plunderer!
Rhad. I do not mean to wage a war of words.
Repent thee of this insult, of these chains
On him, who represents a people here.

Phar. Anon thou'lt see how I respect that people.
My just revenge shall tell thee; on thy head
And thine, Megistus, sudden vengeance falls.
Meg. Alas! worn out with age and misery,
I long to lay me in the shroud of death.
Phar. I grant thy wish—what words, fair fugitive,
Can colour thy deceit?
Zen. The heart resolved
Wants no excuse, no colouring of words.
I found my husband, flew to his embrace;
This, this is he! the lord of my desires—
With him, content, I'll traverse o'er the world.
Phar. Dost thou avow it too?
Zen. Do I avow it?
Yes, I exult, I glory in it—Think'st thou
I'll prove so meanly false to honour's cause,
As to apologize for being faithful?
Ter. I see Flamminius has already schooled her
In Roman maxims——
Rhad. Miserable prince!
I will not answer thee—too soon thy heart
For this last feat will bitterly reproach thee!
Ter. Away with thy delusive arts—if ever
I form alliance with that haughty people,
Those ravagers of earth, if e'er again
I hold communion with thee, may the gods—
May Pharsamanes—but it cannot be—
My heart, high-beating in my country's cause,
Vows an eternal enmity with Rome. [*Exit.*
Rhad. Thee, Pharasmanes, thee my voice addresses—
Thou know'st my title to her—Hymen's rites
Long since united both——Then loose these chains;
'Tis in the name of Rome I ask it——
Phar. Slave!
Thy title, by the rights of war, is now extinguished.
Captivity dissolves her former ties,
And now the laws of arms have made her mine.
Zen. And are there laws to change the human heart?
To alter the affections of the soul?
Know that my heart is ruled by other laws,
The laws of truth, of honour, and of love.
This is my husband! source of all my comfort!
With him I'll live—with him will dare to die!
Phar. By Heaven, some mystery—thou treacherous fair!
Mark well my words——unfold thy birth and rank—
My mind, uncertain, wanders in conjecture—
Who, and what art thou? Vain is every guess—
Resolve my doubts, or else the Roman's doom
Shall be determined straight——
Zen. And my resolve,
Tyrant, is fixed to share my husband's fate.
That I unfold—that sentiment reveal—
To Heaven and earth reveal it—for the rest,
Guess if you can, determine if you dare.
Phar. Quick, drag Flamminius hence—
Rhad. Slaves, hold your hands—
My character protects me here——
Phar. Dispatch!
Instant dispatch, and seize Megistus, too!
[*Megistus is led o .*
Zen. Horror! call back the word—it shall not be—
Here will I hold him—barbarous ruffians hold—
Murder! my life! my lord! my husband! oh!
[*Rhadamistus is dragged off.*
Phar. Give him the torture; let your keenest pangs
Extort each secret from him——
Zen. Pharasmanes!
Thus lowly humbled, prostrate in the dust,
Washing your feet with tears—have mercy! this
Will be the blackest, worst of all your murders.
Phar. There's but one way to mitigate his doom.
Zen. Give me to know it—spare him—spare his life.
Phar. Abjure the slave, and, by connubial vows,
This instant make thee partner of my throne.
Zen. My faith, my love, my very life is his—
My child is his—oh! think thou see'st my infant
Lifting his little hands—
Phar. I'll hear no more;
Or yield this moment, or the traitor dies.
[*Exit Pharasmanes.*
Zen. [*Alone.*] Inhuman tyrant! madness seize my brain!
Swallow me earth! here shall these desperate hands
Strike on thy flinty bosom, here my voice
Pierce to thy centre, till, with pity touched,
Your caverns open wide to hide a wretch
From hated men, from misery like this.

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Afflicted mourner, raise thee from the earth.
Zen. What voice is that? I know thee well—thou art
That fiend accurst, the murderous Teribazus!
Yes, thou art welcome! [*Rising.*] Thou delight'st in blood—
I am your willing victim; plunge your sword
Deep in my heart; I'll thank thee for the stroke,
Since thou hast murdered all my soul held dear.
Ter. Assuage this storm of grief, nor blame a lover
That dotes, like me——could I behold that form
Snatched from my arms?
Zen. You know not what you've done—
Your blameless brother—
Ter. How!
Zen. You've murdered him——
Your brother Rhadamistus——
Ter. Rhadamistus!
Zen. By thee he dies—that is your splendid deed——

Ter. What say'st thou? he my brother—urge me not
To instant madness—is he—tell me—say—
Art thou Zenobia?
Zen. Yes, that fatal wretch!
Ter. If this be so——what had I done, ye powers!
To merit this extremity of woe—
Why did'st thou hide the awful secret from me?
Zen. Could I betray him—could I trust your father,
Whose fell ambition, whose relentless rage,
Has fixed a price on our devoted heads?
Ter. Then shall this hated being—no! I'll live
To save a brother still—he shall not die—
Oh! let me seek him, throw me at his feet,
Implore forgiveness, and protract his days.
[*Exit Teribazus.*
Zen. It is in vain—he's lost—we both must perish——
And then my child—who then shall guard his youth?
No more these eyes shall see him—my sweet boy
Will break his heart, and unregarded die!

Enter ZOPIRON.

Zop. All's lost! all ruined!—to the cave of death
Even now the guards lead Rhadamistus forth.
Zen. Thou see'st the sad reverse!—immortal spirits,
Ye winged virtues, that, with pitying eye,
Watch the afflicted! will ye not inspire
In this sad hour, one great, one glorious thought,
Above the vulgar flight of common souls,
To save, at once, my husband and my child?—
The inspiration comes! the bright idea
Expands my heart, and charms my glowing soul.
Zop. My gracious queen, let not a blind despair——
Zen. Talk not, Zopiron, when the god inspires!
The god! the god!—my heart receives him all—
My lord, my Rhadamistus still shall live. [*Exit.*
Zop. Yet, I conjure thee, hear thy faithful slave! [*Follows her out.*

SCENE II.

Enter RHADAMISTUS *and Guards.*

Rhad. Say, whither do you lead me?—does your tyrant
Repent this horrid outrage?

Enter TERIBAZUS.

Ter. Guards, withdraw
To a remoter ground. [*Exeunt Soldiers.*
Rhad. Mistaken prince!
My heart bleeds for thee———
Ter. Oh! too well I know
The depth of guilt in which the fates have plunged me.
I cannot look upon thee.
Rhad. Oh! my brother,
Thus, let me, even in ruin, thus embrace thee.
Ter. Dost thou forgive me?—could I e'er have thought
To see thee here? my rashness has undone thee!
Rhad. No, thou art innocent—the guilt is mine,
The guilt of mean, ungenerous policy,
Of selfish wisdom, disingenuous art,
That from a friend kept back the fatal secret,
When, with the ardour of unbounded confidence,
I should have rushed with transport to thy arms,
Unbosomed all, and wrapt thee in my heart.
Ter. Alas! I've heaped these horrors on your head—
I've sealed thy doom—that is a brother's gift—
The first essay of Teribazus' friendship!
But I am doomed to be a wretch abhorred,
Of men and gods abhorred! doomed, like my father,
To drench these murderous hands in brother's blood!
Rhad. Embitter not the pangs that rive my soul—
Where is Zenobia?—unrelenting powers!
Was it for this your persecuting wrath
Gave me to meet her, gave that angel-sweetness
To these delighted eyes, these eager arms?
Ter. I'll give you freedom still—by Heaven I will—
Rhad. Was she but given me to afflict her more?
To wake in that dear breast a gleam of joy,
A mockery of joy—joy, scarce, ye powers!
Divided by the moment of delight
From black despair, from agony and death?
Ter. I will protect her, will restore her to thee,
Or do a deed shall strike mankind with horror!
Not even a father shall retard my sword—
In his own blood I'll drench it.
Rhad. Ha!——
Ter. This hand,
Ere thou shalt fall a victim to his fury,
Shall to the heart, the inhuman heart of him
Who dares—
Rhad. No more of that—can I consent,
That a brave generous youth, a much-loved brother,
For every virtue famed, shall thus debase,
By an atrocious deed, his fair renown,
And perpetrate a dark insidious work?
Oh! I should well deserve the worst of ills—
I then should justify a father's cruelty!
Ter. He has undone thee, has undone us all,
But yet thou shalt not die—by Heaven I swear—
Yes, take me, horror! pour into my heart
Thy blackest purpose—nerve my lifted arm
To dash him headlong from his glittering throne,
A terrible example to the world.
Rhad. Beware, beware, my brother—yet reflect—
You would strike vice with terror—tell me, then,

Would not the act of rash impetuous zeal,
Would not the example arm the ruffian's hand?
Thy virtue thus inflames thy generous ardour—
But oh! my brother, let it not be said,
That virtue ever held the murderer's knife!

Ter. Gods! have I ruined such unheard-of goodness?
Swift I'll dispatch a message to Paulinus,
And call his legions to assault the camp.

Enter TIGRANES, *and Guards.*

Tig. Guards, seize your prisoner—in a dungeon's gloom
Plunge him sequestered from the light of heaven.
'Tis Pharasmanes' will——

Ter. Thou meddling fiend!
I will attend his steps; will still protect him
From men like thee——

Rhad. Should Pharasmanes dare
To violate the rights of public law,
Rome is at hand, and will have ample vengeance.
[*Exit with Teribazus.*

Tig. My thirst of vengeance shall be sated first.
Yes, guard him, prince; it makes thy ruin sure!
Thy Ariana, too, while fate is busy,
Shall meet her doom, and leave my road to glory
All smooth and level to ambition's wish.

Enter ZOPIRON.

Zop. 'Gainst Rome's ambassador, the king, Tigranes,
Suspends his sentence till his further orders.
The queen commands it, too.

Tig. The queen! what queen?

Zop. The beauteous Ariana; now your sovereign.

Tig. Has she relented? is she married to him?

Zop. She is—the scene with various passions burned!
Her tresses all unbound, with faded charms,
Yet lovely even in sorrow, through the ranks
Eager she flew, with shrieks, with outstretched arms,
Invoking every god! the wondering soldier,
With softened sinews, dropt the sword to earth,
And gazed, with mixed emotions, as she passed.
Prone to the ground, at Pharasmanes' feet
She fell—he raised her soon, and smiled consent—
To the king's tent she pressed with eager speed—
The exulting monarch called his priests around him,
And soon, with solemn march and festive song,
In his pavilion sought the blooming bride.

Tig. This sudden change, Zopiron, this rash haste,
I like it not.

Zop. Nor I, Tigranes: doubt,
Suspicion, fear, and wonder, and mistrust,
Rise in each anxious thought.

Tig. But, didst thou see
The ceremony closed?

Zop. I did: at first
All pale and trembling Ariana stood:
Then, more collected, with undaunted step,
She to the altar bore the nuptial cup.
There reverent bowed, and 'hear, ye gods!' she said,
'Hear! and record the purpose of my soul!'
With trembling lips then kissed the sacred vase,
And, as our country's solemn rites require,
Drank of the hallowed liquor. From her hand
The king received it, and, with eager joy,
As to his soul he took the nectared draught,
With stedfast eye she viewed him, whilst a smile
Of sickly joy gleamed faintly o'er her visage.

Tig. Well, she's our queen——the diadem is her's——

Zop. How long to wear it, Heaven alone can tell.

SCENE II.—*The back scene draws, and discovers the king's pavilion, with an altar, and fire blazing on it; soft music is played, and they come forward.*

Enter PHARASMENES *and* ZENOBIA.

Phar. At length my Ariana's soft compliance
Endears the present bliss, and gives an earnest
Of joy, to brighten a long train of years.

Zen. Alas! fond man expatiates oft in fancy,
Unconscious of the fates, and oft, in thought,
Anticipates a bliss he ne'er enjoys.

Phar. Away with gloomy care, for thou art mine;
Thou, Ariana! all our future days
Shall smile with gay, with ever-young desire,
And not a cloud o'er-cast the bright serene.

Zen. And does thy penetrating eye pervade
What time has yet in store?

Phar. Why dost thou ask?

Zen. I have been used to grief——release the Roman,
And give him hence safe conduct to his friends;
I then shall be at peace.

Phar. Beware, beware!
Nor rouse again the pangs, that fire a soul,
Which fiercely doats like mine.

Zen. Dismiss him hence;
Give him his life—it was your marriage vow
He should not suffer—let me see him first;
Grant me one interview, one little hour;
In that poor space I can crowd all that's left me
Of love, and tenderness, and fond concern,
Before we part for ever—

Phar. Fond concern!
And love, and tenderness! and shall the Roman
Usurp a monarch's due? that look betrays
The secret workings of a heart estranged!
And shall the man, who dares dispute my love,
Shall the slave breathe a moment? Haste, Tigranes,

And see immediate execution on him.
[*Exit Tigranes.*
Zen. Oh! stay, Tigranes——barbarous man, recall
The horrid mandate——
Phar. By immortal love,
I see the slave still triumphs in your heart.
Zen. Oh! spare him, spare him! by the vital air,
By your own promised faith— [*Kneels to him.*
Phar. Since loved by thee,
His doom is doubly sealed.
Zen. You shall not fly me—
Now tear me, drag me, grovelling in the dust,
Tear off these hands—tear, tear me piece-meal first—
Phar. Nay, then, since force must do it—
[*Shakes her off.*
Zen. Barbarous tyrant!
[*She lies stretched on the ground.*
Phar. I go to see the minion of your heart
Expire in pangs before me—ha! what means
This more than winter's frost that chills my veins?
Zen. [*Looking up.*] That groan revives, and calls me back to life!
Phar. I cannot move—each vital function's lost—
The purple current of my blood is stopt—
I freeze—I burn—Oh! tis the stroke of death—
[*Falls on the ground.*
Zen. [*Rising.*] Yes, tyrant, yes; it is the stroke of death,
And I inflict it—I have done it all—
Phar. Pernicious traitress! thou!
Zen. My vengeance did it—
Zenobia's vengeance! 'tis Zenobia strikes!
Zenobia executes her justice on thee!
Phar. Oh! dire, accurst event! art thou Zenobia?
Zen. Yes, thou fell monster, know me for Zenobia!
Know, the ambassador is Rhadamistus!
Haste thee, Zopiron, and proclaim him king.
[*Exit Zopiron.*
Phar. May curses light upon thee——Oh! I die!
And racks and wheels disjoint me—
Zen. Writhe in torment,
In fiercer pangs than my dear father knew.
But I revenge his death—I dashed the cup
With precious poison!—[*A flourish of trumpets*]—ha! now, tyrant, wake,
And hear those sounds—my Rhadamistus reigns!
Phar. What, and no help! it is too late—the fates,
The fiends surround me—more than Ætna's fires
Burn in my veins—yet Heaven—no—'tis in vain—
I cannot rise—my crimes—my ten-fold crimes—
They pull me! oh!— [*Dies.*
Zen. There fled the guilty spirit!
Shade of my father, view your daughter now!
Behold her struggling in a righteous cause!
Behold her conquering in the tyrant's camp!
Behold your murderer levelled in the dust!
[*A second flourish of trumpets.*
Rhad. [*Within the scenes.*] Where is Zenobia?
Zen. Rhadamistus, here!

Enter RHADAMISTUS, TERIBAZUS, MEGISTUS, ZOPIRON, *&c.*

Rhad. Oh! let me, let me thus—thus pour my soul,
Thus speak my joy—thus melt within thy arms!
Zen. My lord! my life! my Rhadamistus! come,
Grow to my heart—that bounds and springs to meet thee.
Rhad. Once more revived, and snatched again from death,
Thus do I see thee? these are speechless joys,
And tears alone express them—
Zen. Have I saved thee?
All-gracious gods! 'tis rapture in the extreme!
Rhad. My sweet deliverer! my all of bliss!
Zen. Oh! it is joy too exquisite! and yet
Grief will embitter ecstacy like this!
There lies your father!
Rhad. All his crimes
Be buried with him! nature will have way,
And o'er his corse thus sheds the filial tear.
Ter. Oh! that my tears could wash away his stains!
Zen. Wilt thou forgive his murderer?
Rhad. For thee,
Beset with wrongs, and injured as thou wert,
In every region fame shall clap her wings,
And the recording muse applaud thy virtue.
Zen. If thou forgiv'st me, I am blessed indeed!
Now we shall part no more—Megistus, too!
Thou good old man! Let me embrace thee——Ha!
Meg. The blood forsakes her cheek—her eyes are fixed!
Zen. Support me—help me—Oh! I die—I die— [*Falls in Megistus' arms.*
Rhad. She faints—her colour dies. Revive, Zenobia!
Revive, my love! thy Rhadamistus thus,
Thus calls your fluttering spirit back to life!
Zen. It will not be—the toil of life is o'er—
My Rhadamistus— [*Sinks down on the ground.*
Rhad. Must I lose thee, then?
Zen. Oh! the envenomed cup! the marriage rites
Required that I should drink it first myself—
There was no other way—I did it freely
To save thy life—to save thee for my child.——
Rhad. Art thou a victim for a wretch like me?
Is there no antidote to stop the course
Of this vile poison?
Zen. None—it rages now—

It rages through my veins——my eyes grow dim——
They are lost in darkness—oh! I cannot see thee—
Where art thou, Rhadamistus? must I breathe
Longer in life, and never see thee more!
And are my eyes forbid one dear farewell?
Oh! cruel stars! must they not fix on thee
The last expiring glance?

Rhad. Relentless powers!
There lies Zenobia! round that pallid beauty
Call your ætherial host, each winged virtue;
Call every angel down; bid them behold
That matchless excellence, and then refuse
Soft pity if they can!

Zen. Megistus, seek my child,
And bring him to his father—Rhadamistus,
Wilt thou protect him? My sweet orphan-babe,
I leave thee, too!—oh!—train him up in virtue—
Wilt thou be fond of him—a mother's fondness
My child should meet—oh! raise me, Rhadamistus—
Give me thy hand—my little infant—Oh!—

[*Dies.*

Rhad. Tears, you do well to stop—your wretched drops
Are unavailing at a sight like this!
And art thou gone? ah! thus defaced and pale,
Thus do I see thee? is that ghastly form
All that is left me of thee? give me daggers,
Give me some instant means of death, my friends,
That I may throw this load of life away,
And let our hearts be both inurned together!

Ter. Live, live my brother, for your infant son—
Let him prevail——

Rhad. Inhuman that thou art!
Think you I'll stay imprisoned here in life,
When there—behold her—how she smiles in death!—
When there that form——think ye I'll linger here?
Dead, dead Zenobia! still I have thee thus—
You ne'er shall part us——this at least I'll hold,
And cling for ever to these pale, pale charms;
Here breathe my last, and, faithful still in death,
Love shall unite us in one peaceful grave.

Meg. Now, old Megistus, gods! has lived too long!

Ter. Bring every aid, all medicinal skill,
To call a wretched brother back to life,
And give each lenient balm to woes like his.
From thee, ambition, what misfortunes flow?
To thee, what varied ills weak mortals owe?
'Twas this for years laid desolate the land,
And armed against a son the father's hand;
To black despair poor lost Zenobia drove;
The hapless victim of disastrous love!——

[*Exeunt omnes.*

THE

GRECIAN DAUGHTER.

BY

MURPHY.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

DIONYSIUS, *usurper of Syracuse.*
EVANDER, *the deposed king.*
PHOCION, *husband to Euphrasia.*
MELANTHON, *friend to Evander.*
PHILOTAS, ARCAS, } *employed in guarding Evander.*
Greek Herald.
CALIPPUS, *partizan of the usurper.*
Greek Soldier.
Officer

WOMEN.

EUPHRASIA, *daughter of Evander.*
ERIXENE, *her attendant.*

Scene—Syracuse.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Enter MELANTHON *and* PHILOTAS.

Melan. YET, a moment; hear, Philotas, hear me.
Phil. No more; it must not be.
Melan. Obdurate man!
Thus wilt thou spurn me, when a king distressed,
A good, a virtuous, venerable king,
The father of his people, from a throne,
Which long, with every virtue he adorned,
Torn by a ruffian, by a tyrant's hand,
Groans in captivity? In his own palace
Lives a sequestered prisoner? Oh! Philotas,
If thou hast not renounced humanity,
Let me behold my sovereign; once again
Admit me to his presence; let me see
My royal master.
Phil. Urge thy suit no further;
Thy words are fruitless; Dionysius' orders
Forbid access; he is our sovereign now;
'Tis his to give the law, mine to obey.
Melan. Thou can'st not mean it: his to give the law!
Detested spoiler!—his! a vile usurper!
Have we forgot the elder Dionysius,
Surnamed the Tyrant? To Sicilia's throne
The monster waded through whole seas of blood.
Sore groaned the land beneath his iron rod,
Till, roused at length, Evander came from Greece,
Like Freedom's genius came, and sent the tyrant,
Stripped of the crown, and to his humble rank
Once more reduced, to roam, for vile subsistence,
A wandering sophist through the realms of Greece.
Phil. Melanthon, yes: full clearly I remember
The splendid day, when all rejoicing Sicily
Hailed her deliverer.
Melan. Shall the tyrant's son

Deduce a title from the father's guilt?
Philotas, thou wert once the friend of goodness;
Thou art a Greek; fair Corinth gave thee birth;
I marked thy growing youth; I need not tell,
With what an equal sway Evander reigned,
How just, how upright, generous, and good!
From every region bards and sages came;
Whate'er of science Egypt stored,
All that the east had treasured, all that Greece
Of mortal wisdom taught, and Plato's voice,
Was heard in Sicily. Shall Dionysius
Extinguish every virtue from the land,
Bow to his yoke the necks of freeborn men,
And here perpetuate a tyrant's reign?

Phil. Whate'er his right, to him, in Syracuse,
All bend the knee; his the supreme dominion,
And death and torment wait his sovereign nod.

Melan. But soon that power shall cease: behold his walls
Now close encircled by the Grecian bands;
Timoleon leads them on; indignant Corinth
Sends her avenger forth, arrayed in terror,
To hurl ambition from a throne usurped,
And bid all Sicily resume her rights.

Phil. Thou wert a statesman once, Melanthon; now,
Grown dim with age, thy eye pervades no more
The deep-laid schemes which Dionysius plans.
Know then, a fleet from Carthage even now
Stems the rough billow; and, ere yonder sun,
That, now declining, seeks the western wave,
Shall to the shades of night resign the world,
Thou'lt see the Punic sails in yonder bay,
Whose waters wash the walls of Syracuse.

Melan. Art thou a stranger to Timoleon's name?
Intent to plan, and circumspect to see
All possible events, he rushes on
Resistless in his course! Your boasted master
Scarce stands at bay; each hour the strong blockade
Hems him in closer, and, ere long, thou'lt view
Oppression's iron rod to fragments shivered!
The good Evander then——

Phil. Alas! Evander
Will ne'er behold the golden time you look for!

Melan. How! not behold it! Say, Philotas, speak;
Has the fell tyrant, have his felon murderers—

Phil. As yet, my friend, Evander lives.

Melan. And yet,
Thy dark half-hinted purpose—lead me to him;
If thou hast murdered him——

Phil. By Heaven, he lives!

Melan. Then bless me with one tender interview!
Thrice has the sun gone down, since last these eyes
Have seen the good old king; say, why is this?
Wherefore debarred his presence? Thee, Philotas,
The troops obey, that guard the royal prisoner;
Each avenue to thee is open; thou
Can'st grant admittance; let me, let me see him!

Phil. Entreat no more; the soul of Dionysius
Is ever wakeful; rent with all the pangs
That wait on conscious guilt.

Melan. But when dun night——

Phil. Alas! it cannot be: but mark my words.
Let Greece urge on her general assault.
Dispatch some friend, who may o'erleap the walls,
And tell Timoleon, the good old Evander
Has lived three days, by Dionysius' order,
Locked up from every sustenance of nature,
And life, now wearied out, almost expires.

Melan. If any spark of virtue dwells within thee,
Lead me, Philotas, lead me to his prison.

Phil. The tyrant's jealous care hath moved him thence.

Melan. Ha! moved him, say'st thou?

Phil. At the midnight hour,
Silent conveyed him up the steep ascent,
To where the elder Dionysius formed,
On the sharp summit of the pointed rock,
Which overhangs the deep, a dungeon drear:
Cell within cell, a labyrinth of horror,
Deep caverned in the cliff, where many a wretch,
Unseen by mortal eye, has groaned in anguish,
And died obscure, unpitied, and unknown.

Melan. Clandestine murderer! Yes, there's the scene
Of horrid massacre. Full oft I've walked,
When all things lay in sleep and darkness hushed.
Yes oft I've walked the lonely sullen beach,
And heard the mournful sound of many a corse
Plunged from the rock into the wave beneath,
That murmurs on the shore. And means he thus
To end a monarch's life? Oh! grant my prayer;
My timely succour may protect his days;
The guard is yours——

Phil. Forbear; thou plead'st in vain;
And though I feel soft pity throbbing here,
Though each emotion prompts the generous deed,
I must not yield; it were assured destruction.
Farewell! dispatch a message to the Greeks;
I'll to my station; now thou know'st the worst.
[*Exit.*

Melan. Oh, lost Evander! Lost Euphrasia too!
How will her gentle nature bear the shock
Of a dear father, thus in lingering pangs
A prey to famine, like the veriest wretch,
Whom the hard hand of misery hath griped!
In vain she'll rave with impotence of sorrow;
Perhaps provoke her fate: Greece arms in vain;
All's lost; Evander dies!

Enter CALIPPUS.

Cal. Where is the king?
Our troops, that sallied to attack the foe,
Retire disordered; to the eastern gate

The Greeks pursue; Timoleon rides in blood!
Arm, arm, and meet their fury.
Melan. To the citadel
Direct thy footsteps; Dionysius, there,
Marshals a chosen band.
Cal. Do thou call forth
Thy hardy veterans; haste, or all is lost! [*Exit.*
[*Warlike music.*
Melan. Now, ye just gods! now look propitious down;
Now give the Grecian sabre tenfold edge,
And save a virtuous king! [*Warlike music.*

Enter EUPHRASIA.

Euph. War on, ye heroes,
Ye great assertors of a monarch's cause!
Let the wild tempest rage. Melanthon, ha!
Did'st thou not hear the vast tremendous roar?
Down tumbling from its base, the eastern tower
Burst on the tyrant's ranks, and on the plain
Lies an extended ruin.
Melan. Still new horrors
Increase each hour, and gather round our heads.
Euph. The glorious tumult lifts my towering soul.
Once more, Melanthon, once again, my father
Shall mount Sicilia's throne.
Melan. Alas! that hour
Would come with joy to every honest heart,
Would shed divinest blessings from its wing;
But no such hour in all the round of time,
I fear, the fates averse will e'er lead on.
Euph. And still, Melanthon, still does pale despair
Depress thy spirit? Lo! Timoleon comes,
Armed with the power of Greece; the brave, the just,
God-like Timoleon! ardent to redress,
He guides the war, and gains upon his prey.
A little interval shall set the victor
Within our gates triumphant.
Melan. Still my fears
Forebode for thee. Would thou had'st left this place,
When hence your husband, the brave Phocion, fled,
Fled with your infant son!
Euph. In duty fixed,
Here I remained, while my brave generous Phocion
Fled with my child, and from his mother's arms
Bore my sweet little one. Full well thou know'st
The pangs I suffered in that trying moment.
Did I not weep? Did I not rave and shriek,
And by the roots tear my dishevelled hair?
Did I not follow to the sea-beat shore,
Resolved with him, and with my blooming boy,
To trust the winds and waves?
Melan. Deem not, Euphrasia,
I e'er can doubt thy constancy and love.
Euph. Melanthon, how I loved! the gods, who saw
Each secret image that my fancy formed,
The gods can witness how I loved my Phocion.
And yet I went not with him. Could I do it?
Could I desert my father? Could I leave
The venerable man, who gave me being,
A victim here in Syracuse, nor stay
To watch his fate, to visit his affliction,
To cheer his prison hours, and, with the tear
Of filial virtue, bid even bondage smile?
Melan. The pious act, whate'er the fates intend,
Shall merit heart-felt praise.
Euph. Yes, Phocion, go;
Go with my child, torn from this matron breast,
This breast that still should yield its nurture to him,
Fly with my infant to some happier shore.
If he be safe, Euphrasia dies content.
Till that sad close of all, the task be mine
To tend a father with delighted care,
To smooth the pillow of declining age,
See him sink gradual into mere decay.
On the last verge of life watch every look,
Explore each fond unutterable wish,
Catch his last breath, and close his eyes in peace.
Melan. I would not add to my afflictions; yet
My heart misgives; Evander's fatal period——
Euph. Still is far off; the gods have sent relief,
And once again I shall behold him king.
Melan. Alas! those glittering hopes but lend a ray
To gild the clouds, that hover o'er your head,
Soon to rain sorrow down, and plunge you deeper
In black despair.
Euph. The spirit-stirring virtue,
That glows within me, ne'er shall know despair.
No, I will trust the gods. Desponding man!
Hast thou not heard with what resistless ardour
Timoleon drives the tumult of the war?
Hast thou not heard him thundering at our gates?
The tyrant's pent up in his last retreat;
Anon thou'lt see his battlements in dust,
His walls, his ramparts, and his towers in ruin;
Destruction pouring in on every side;
Pride and oppression at their utmost need;
And nought to save him in his hopeless hour.
[*A flourish of trumpets.*
Melan. Ha! the fell tyrant comes—Beguile his rage,
And o'er your sorrows cast a dawn of gladness.

Enter DIONYSIUS, CALIPPUS, *Officers, &c.*

Dion. The vain, presumptuous Greek! his hopes of conquest,
Like a gay dream, are vanished into air.
Proudly elate, and flushed with easy triumph
O'er vulgar warriors, to the gates of Syracuse
He urged the war, till Dionysius' arm
Let slaughter loose, and taught his dastard train
To seek their safety by inglorious flight.

†

Euph. O Dionysius, if distracting fears
Alarm this throbbing bosom, you will pardon
A frail and tender sex. Should ruthless war
Roam through our streets, and riot here in blood,
Where shall the lost Euphrasia find a shelter?
In vain she'll kneel, and clasp the sacred altar.
O let me, then, in mercy, let me seek
The gloomy mansion, where my father dwells;
I die content, if in his arms I perish.

Dion. Thou lovely trembler, hush thy fears to rest.
The Greek recoils; like the impetuous surge
That dashes on the rock, there breaks, and foams,
And backward rolls into the sea again.
All shall be well in Syracuse: a fleet
Appears in view, and brings the chosen sons
Of Carthage. From the hill that fronts the main,
I saw their canvass swelling with the wind,
While on the purple wave the western sun
Glanced the remains of day.

Euph. Yet till the fury
Of war subside, the wild, the horrid interval,
In safety let me soothe to dear delight
In a loved father's presence: from his sight,
For three long days, with specious feigned excuse
Your guards debarred me. Oh! while yet he lives,
Indulge a daughter's love: worn out with age,
Soon must he seal his eyes in endless night,
And with his converse charm my ear no more.

Dion. Why thus anticipate misfortune? Still
Evander mocks the injuries of time.
Calippus, thou survey the city round;
Station the centinels, that no surprise
Invade the unguarded works, while drowsy night
Weighs down the soldier's eye. Afflicted fair,
Thy couch invites thee. When the tumult's o'er,
Thou'lt see Evander with redoubled joy.
Though now, unequal to the cares of empire,
His age sequester him, yet honours high
Shall gild the evening of his various day.

Euph. For this benignity, accept my thanks.
They gush in tears, and my heart pours its tribute.

Dion. Perdiccas, ere the morn's revolving light
Unveil the face of things, do thou dispatch
A well-oared galley to Hamilcar's fleet;
At the north point of yonder promontory,
Let some selected officer instruct him
To moor his ships, and issue on the land.
Then may Timoleon tremble: vengeance, then,
Shall overwhelm his camp, pursue his bands,
With fatal havock, to the ocean's margin,
And cast their limbs to glut the vulture's famine,
In mangled heaps, upon the naked shore.
[*Exit Dionysius.*

Euph. What do I hear? Melanthon, can it be?
If Carthage comes, if her perfidious sons
List in his cause, the dawn of freedom's gone.

Melan. Woe, bitterest woe impends; thou would'st not think———

Euph. How?—Speak! unfold!

Melan. My tongue denies its office.

Euph. How is my father? Say, Melanthon—

Melan. He,
I fear to shock thee with the tale of horror!
Perhaps he dies this moment. Since Timoleon
First formed his lines round this beleaguered city,
No nutriment has touched Evander's lips.
In the deep caverns of the rock imprisoned,
He pines in bitterest want.

Euph. To that abode
Of woe and horror, that last stage of life,
Has the fell tyrant moved him?

Melan. There sequestered,
Alas! he soon must perish.

Euph. Well, my heart,
Well do your vital drops forget to flow!

Melan. Enough his sword has reeked with public slaughter;
Now, dark insidious deeds must thin mankind.

Euph. Oh! night, that oft hast heard my piercing shrieks
Disturb thy awful silence; oft has heard
Each stroke these hands, in frantic sorrow, gave,
From this sad breast resounding; now no more
I mean to vent complaints; I mean not now
With busy memory to retrace the wrongs
The tyrant heaped on our devoted race.
I bear it all; with calmest patience bear it:
Resigned and wretched, desperate and lost.

Melan. Despair, alas! is all the sad resource
Our fate allows us now.

Eaph. Yet, why despair?
Is that the tribute to a father due?
Blood is his due, Melanthon; yes, the blood,
The vile, black blood, that fills the tyrant's veins,
Would graceful look upon my dagger's point.
Come, Vengeance, come! shake off this feeble sex,
Sinew my arm, and guide it to his heart.
And thou, O filial piety! that rul'st
My woman's breast, turn to vindictive rage;
Assume the port of justice; shew mankind
Tyrannic guilt had never dared in Syracuse,
Beyond the reach of virtue.

Melan. Yet beware;
Controul this frenzy that bears down your reason.
Surrounded by his guards, the tyrant mocks
Your utmost fury; moderate your zeal,
Nor let him hear these transports of the soul,
These wild upbraidings.

Euph. Shall Euphrasia's voice
Be hushed to silence, when a father dies?
Shall not the monster hear his deeds accurst?
Shall he not tremble, when a daughter comes,
Wild with her griefs, and terrible with wrongs,
Fierce in despair, all nature, in her cause,
Alarmed and roused with horror? Yes, Melanthon!
The man of blood shall hear me; yes! my voice
Shall mount aloft upon the whirlwind's wing,

Pierce yon blue vault, and at the throne of Heaven
Call down red vengeance on the murderer's head.
Melanthon, come; my wrongs will lend me force;
The weakness of my sex is gone; this arm
Feels tenfold strength; this arm shall do a deed
For heaven and earth, for men and gods, to wonder at!
This arm shall vindicate a father's cause.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A wild romantic scene amidst overhanging rocks; a cavern on one side.*

ARCAS. [*With a spear in his hand.*]

THE gloom of night sits heavy on the world;
And o'er the solemn scene such stillness reigns,
As 'twere a pause of nature; on the beach
No murmuring billow breaks; the Grecian tents
Lie sunk in sleep; no gleaming fires are seen;
All Syracuse is hushed: no stir abroad,
Save ever and anon the dashing oar,
That beats the sullen wave. And hark!—Was that
The groan of anguish from Evander's cell,
Piercing the midnight gloom?—It is the sound
Of bustling prows, that cleave the briny deep.
Perhaps, at this dead hour, Hamilcar's fleet
Rides in the bay.

Enter PHILOTAS, *from the cavern.*

Phil. What ho! brave Arcas! ho!
Arc. Why thus desert thy couch?
Phil. Methought the sound
Of distant uproar chased affrighted sleep.
Arc. At intervals the oar's resounding stroke
Comes echoing from the main. Save that report,
A death-like silence through the wide expanse
Broods o'er the dreary coast.
Phil. Do thou retire,
And seek repose; the duty of thy watch
Is now performed; I take thy post.
Arc. How fares
Your royal prisoner?
Phil. Arcas, shall I own
A secret weakness? My heart inward melts
To see that suffering virtue. On the earth,
The cold, damp earth, the royal victim lies;
And while pale famine drinks his vital spirit,
He welcomes death, and smiles himself to rest.
Oh! would I could relieve him! Thou withdraw;
Thy wearied nature claims repose; and now
The watch is mine.
Arc. May no alarm disturb thee. [*Exit.*
Phil. Some dread event is labouring into birth.
At close of day the sullen sky held forth
Unerring signals. With disastrous glare
The moon's full orb rose crimsoned o'er with blood;
And lo! athwart the gloom a falling star
Trails a long tract of fire!—What daring step
Sounds on the flinty rock? Stand there! what ho!
Speak, ere thou dar'st advance! Unfold thy purpose;
Who and what art thou?

Enter EUPHRASIA, *bearing a light in her hand.*

Euph. Mine no hostile step;
I bring no valour to alarm thy fears:
It is a friend approaches.
Phil. Ha! what mean
Those plaintive notes?
Euph. Here is no ambushed Greek,
No warrior to surprise thee on the watch.
An humble suppliant comes: Alas! my strength,
Exhausted, quite forsakes this weary frame.
Phil. What voice thus piercing through the gleam of night—
What art thou? what thy errand? quickly say
What wretch, with what intent, at this dead hour—
Wherefore alarm'st thou thus our peaceful watch?
Euph. Let no mistrust affright thee—Lo! a wretch,
The veriest wretch that ever groaned in anguish,
Comes here to grovel on the earth before thee,
To tell her sad, sad tale, implore thy aid—
For sure the power is thine, thou canst relieve
My bleeding heart, and soften all my woes.
Phil. Ha! sure those accents—
[*Takes the light from her.*
Euph. Deign to listen to me.
Phil. Euphrasia!——
Euph. Yes; the lost, undone Euphrasia;
Supreme in wretchedness; to the inmost sense,
Here in the quickest fibre of the heart,
Wounded, transfixed, and tortured to distraction.
Phil. Why, princess, thus anticipate the dawn?
Still sleep and silence wrap the weary world;
The stars in mid career usurp the pole;
The Grecian bands, the winds, the waves are hushed;
All things are mute around us; all but you
Rest in oblivious slumber from their cares.
Euph. Yes, all; all rest: the very murderer sleeps;
Guilt is at rest: I, only, wake to misery.
Phil. How did'st thou gain the summit of the rock?
Euph. Give me my father; here you hold him fettered;
Oh! give him to me!—in the fond pursuit
All pain and peril vanish; love and duty
Inspired the thought; despair itself gave courage;
I climbed the hard ascent; with painful toil
Surmounted craggy cliffs, and pointed rocks—
What will not misery attempt?—If ever
The touch of nature throbbed within your breast,

Admit me to Evander; in these caves
I know he pines in want; let me convey
Some charitable succour to a father!
Phil. Alas! Euphrasia, would I durst comply!
Euph. It will be virtue in thee. Thou, like me,
Wert born in Greece:—Oh! by our common parent—
Nay, stay; thou shalt not fly; Philotas, stay;
You have a father too; think, were his lot
Hard as Evander's, if by felon hands
Chained to the earth, with slow consuming pangs
He felt sharp want, and with an asking eye
Implored relief, yet cruel men denied it,
Wouldst thou not burst through adamantine gates,
Through walls and rocks, to save him? Think, Philotas,
Of thy own aged sire, and pity mine.
Think of the agonies a daughter feels,
When thus a parent wants the common food,
The bounteous hand of nature meant for all!
Phil. 'Twere best withdraw thee, princess; thy assistance
Evander wants not; it is fruitless all;
Thy tears, thy wild entreaties, are in vain.
Euph. Ha!—thou hast murdered him; he is no more;—
I understand thee;—butchers, you have shed
The precious drops of life; yet, e'en in death,
Let me behold him; let a daughter close,
With dutcous hand, a father's beamless eyes;
Print her last kisses on his honoured hand,
And lay him decent in he shroud of death!
Phil. Alas! this frantic grief can nought avail.
Retire, and seek the couch of balmy sleep,
In this dread hour, this season of repose.
Euph. And dost thou, then, inhuman that thou art,
Advise a wretch, like me, to know repose?
This is my last abode: these caves, these rocks,
Shall ring for ever with Euphrasia's wrongs;
All Sicily shall hear me; yonder deep
Shall echo back an injured daughter's cause;
Here will I dwell, and rave, and shriek, and give
These scattered locks to all the passing winds;
Call on Evander lost; and, pouring curses,
And cruel gods, and cruel stars invoking,
Stand on the cliff in madness and despair!
Phil. Yet calm this violence! reflect, Euphrasia,
With what severe enforcement Dionysius
Exacts obedience to his dread command.
If here thou'rt found——
Euph. Here is Euphrasia's mansion,
[*Falls upon the ground.*
Her fixed eternal home; inhuman savages,
Here stretch me with a father's murdered corse!
Then heap your rocks, your mountains on my head!
It will be kindness in you; I shall rest
Entombed within a parent's arms.
Phil. By heaven,
My heart in pity bleeds.
Euph. Talk'st thou of pity?
Yield to the generous instinct; grant my prayer;
Let my eyes view him, gaze their last upon him,
And shew you have some sense of human woe!
Phil. Her vehemence of grief o'erpowers me quite.
My honest heart condemns the barbarous deed,
And if I dare——
Euph. And, if you dare! Is that
The voice of manhood! Honest, if you dare!
'Tis the slave's virtue! 'tis the utmost limit
Of the base coward's honour. Not a wretch,
There's not a villain, not a tool of power,
But, silence interest, extinguish fear,
And he will prove benevolent to man.
The generous heart does more: will dare to all
That honour prompts. How dost thou dare to murder?
Respect the gods, and know no other fear.
Phil. No other fear assails this warlike breast.
I pity your misfortunes; yes, by Heaven,
My heart bleeds for you. Gods! you've touched my soul!
The generous impulse is not given in vain.
I feel thee, Nature, and I dare obey.
Oh! thou hast conquered. Go, Euphrasia, go,
Behold thy father.
Euph. Raise me, raise me up;
I'll bathe thy hand with tears, thou generous man!
Phil. Yet mark my words; if aught of nourishment
Thou wouldst convey, my partners of the watch
Will ne'er consent.
Euph. I will observe your orders:
On any terms, oh! let me, let me see him!
Phil. Yon lamp will guide thee through the caverned way.
Euph. My heart runs o'er in thanks; the pious act
Timoleon shall reward; the bounteous gods,
And thy own virtue, shall reward the deed.
[*Goes into the cave.*
Phil. Prevailing, powerful virtue! Thou subduest
The stubborn heart, and mould'st it to thy purpose.
Would I could save them! But though not for me
The glorious power to shelter innocence,
Yet for a moment to assuage its woes,
Is the best sympathy, the purest joy,
Nature intended for the heart of man,
When thus she gave the social generous tear.
]*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The inside of the cavern.*

Enter ARCAS *and* EUPHRASIA.

Arc. No; on my life I dare not.
Euph. But a small,
A wretched pittance; one poor cordial drop

To renovate exhausted drooping age.
I ask no more.
Arc. Not the smallest store
Of scanty nourishment must pass these walls.
Our lives were forfeit else: a moment's parley
Is all I grant; in yonder cave he lies.
Evan. [*Within the cell.*] Oh, struggling nature! let thy conflict end.
Oh! give me, give me rest.
Euph. My father's voice!
It pierces here! it cleaves my very heart.
I shall expire, and never see him more.
Arc. Repose thee, princess, here; [*Draws a couch.*] here rest thy limbs,
Till the returning blood shall lend thee firmness.
Euph. The caves, the rocks, re-echo to his groans!
And is there no relief?
Arc. All I can grant
You shall command. I will unbar the dungeon,
Unloose the chain that binds him to the rock,
And leave your interview without restraint.
[*Opens a cell in the back scene.*
Euph. Hold, hold, my heart! Oh! how shall I sustain
The agonizing scene? [*Rises.*] I must behold him;
Nature, that drives me on, will lend me force.
Is that my father?
Arc. Take your last farewell.
His vigour seems not yet exhausted quite.
You must be brief, or ruin will ensue? [*Exit.*
Evan. [*Raising himself.*] Oh! when shall I get free? These lingering pangs—
Euph. Behold, ye powers, that spectacle of woe!
Evan. Dispatch me, pitying gods, and save my child!
I burn, I burn; alas! no place of rest!
[*Rises and comes out.*
A little air; once more a breath of air;
Alas! I faint—I die.
Euph. Heart-piercing sight!
Let me support you, sir.
Evan. Oh! lend your arm.
Who'er thou art, I thank thee: that kind breeze
Comes gently o'er my senses; lead me forward:
And is there left one charitable hand
To reach its succours to a wretch like me?
Euph. Well may'st thou ask it. Oh, my breaking heart!
The hand of death is on him.
Evan. Still a little,
A little onward to the air conduct me;
'Tis well; I thank thee; thou art kind and good,
And much I wonder at this generous pity.
Euph. Dost thou not know me, sir?
Evan. Methinks I know
That voice: art thou—alas! my eyes are dim!
Each object swims before me; No, in truth
I do not know thee.
Euph. Not your own Euphrasia?
Evan. Art thou my daughter?
Euph. Oh, my honoured sire!
Evan. My daughter, my Euphrasia? come to close
A father's eyes! Given to my last embrace!
Gods! do I hold her once again? Your mercies
Are without number. [*Falls on the couch.*
This excess of bliss
O'erpowers; it kills; Euphrasia—could I hope it?
I die content. Art thou, indeed, my daughter?
Thou art; my hand is moistened with thy tears;
I pray you do not weep; thou art my child:
I thank you, gods! in my last dying moments
You have not left me. I would pour my praise;
But, oh, your goodness overcomes me quite!
You read my heart; you see what passes there.
Euph. Alas, he faints; the gushing tide of transport
Bears down each feeble sense: restore him, Heaven!
Evan. All, my Euphrasia, all will soon be well.
Pass but a moment, and this busy globe,
Its thrones, its empires, and its bustling millions,
Will seem a speck in the great void of space.
Yet while I stay, thou darling of my age!——
——Nay, dry those tears.
Euph. I will, my father.
Evan. Where,——
I fear to ask it——where is virtuous Phocion?
Euph. Fled from the tyrant's power.
Evan. And left thee here
Exposed and helpless?
Euph. He is all truth and honour:
He fled to save my child.
Evan. My young Evander!
Your boy is safe, Euphrasia? Oh, my heart!
Alas! quite gone; worn out with misery;
Oh, weak, decayed old man!
Euph. Inhuman wretches!
Will none relieve his want? A drop of water
Might save his life, and even that's denied him!
Evan. These strong emotions——Oh! that eager air—
It is too much—assist me; bear me hence,
And lay me down in peace.
Euph. His eyes are fixed!
And those pale quivering lips! He clasps my hand:
What, no assistance! monsters, will you thus
Let him expire in these weak feeble arms?

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. Those wild, those piercing shrieks will give the alarm!
Euph. Support him; bear him hence; 'tis all I ask.
Evan. [*As he is carried off.*] O death! where art thou? Death, thou dread of guilt!
Thou wish of innocence, affliction's friend,
Tired nature calls thee; come, in mercy come,
And lay me pillowed in eternal rest.

My child—where art thou? give me—reach thy hand—
Why dost thou weep? My eyes are dry—alas!
Quite parched, my lips——quite parched, they cleave together.
Euph. Now judge, ye powers, in the whole round of time,
If e'er you viewed a scene of woe like this!
[*Exeunt.*

Enter ARCAS.

Arc. The grey of morn breaks through yon eastern clouds.
'Twere time this interview should end: the hour
Now warns Euphrasia hence: what man could dare,
I have indulged—Philotas! ha! the cell
Left void! Evander gone! What may this mean?
Philotas, speak!

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. Oh! vile, detested lot,
Here to obey the savage tyrant's will,
And murder virtue, that can thus behold
Its executioner, and smile upon him.
That piteous sight!
Arc. She must withdraw, Philotas;
Delay undoes us both. The restless main
Glows with the blush of day. Timoleon's fleet,
That passed the night in busy preparation,
Makes from the shore. On the high craggy point
Of yonder jutting eminence, I marked
Their haughty streamers curling to the wind.
He seeks Hamilcar's fleet. The briny deep
Shall soon be dyed with blood. The fierce alarm
Will rouse our slumbering troops. The time requires,
Without or further pause, or vain excuse,
That she depart this moment.
Phil. Arcas, yes;
My voice shall warn her of the approaching danger. [*Exit.*
Arc. Would she had ne'er adventured to our guard!
I dread the event; and hark! the wind conveys
In clearer sound the uproar of the main.
The fates prepare new havock; on the event
Depends the fate of empire. Wherefore thus
Delays Euphrasia? Ha! what means, Philotas,
That sudden haste, that pale disordered look?

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. Oh! I can hold no more; at such a sight
Even the hard heart of tyranny would melt
To infant softness. Arcas, go, behold
The pious fraud of charity and love;
Behold that unexampled goodness;
See the expedient sharp necessity has taught her;
Thy heart will burn, will melt, will yearn to view
A child like her.
Arc. Ha! Say what mystery
Wakes these emotions?
Phil. Wonder-working virtue!
The father fostered at his daughter's breast!
O, filial piety! The milk designed
For her own offspring, on the parent's lip
Allays the parching fever.
Arc. That device
Has she then formed, eluding all our care,
To minister relief!
Phil. On the bare earth
Evander lies; and as his languid powers
Imbibe with eager thirst the kind refreshment,
And his looks speak unutterable thanks,
Euphrasia views him with the tenderest glance,
Even as a mother doating on her child:
And, ever and anon, amidst the smiles
Of pure delight, of exquisite sensation,
A silent tear steals down; the tear of virtue,
That sweetens grief to rapture. All her laws
Inverted quite, great nature triumphs still.
Arc. The tale unmans my soul.
Phil. Ye tyrants, hear it!
And learn, that while your cruelty prepares
Unheard of torture, virtue can keep pace
With your worst efforts, and can try new modes,
To bid men grow enamoured of her charms.
Arc. Philotas, for Euphrasia, in her cause,
I now can hazard all. Let us preserve
Her father for her.
Phil. Oh! her lovely daring
Transcends all praise. By Heaven he shall not die!
Arc. And yet we must be wary; I will go forth,
And first explore each avenue around,
Lest the fixed centinel obstruct our purpose.
[*Exit.*
Phil. I thank thee, Arcas; we will act like men
Who feel for other woes—she leads him forth,
And tremblingly supports his drooping age.
[*Goes to assist him.*

Enter EUPHRASIA *and* EVANDER.

Evan. Euphrasia, oh, my child! returning life
Glows here about my heart. Conduct me forward:
At the last gasp preserved! Ha! dawning light!
Let me behold; in faith I see thee now;
I do indeed: the father sees his child!
Euph. I have relieved him—Oh! the joy's too great;
'Tis speechless rapture!
Evan. Blessings, blessings on thee!
Euph. My father still shall live. Alas! Philotas,
Could I abandon that white hoary head,
That venerable form! Abandon him
To perish here in misery and famine?
Phil. Thy tears, thou miracle of goodness!

Have triumphed o'er me; these round gushing drops
Attest your conquest. Take him, take your father;
Convey him hence; I do release him to you.
Evan. What said Philotas? Do I fondly dream?
Indeed my senses are imperfect; yet
Methought I heard him! Did he say, release me?
Phil. Thou art my king, and now no more my prisoner;
Go with your daughter, with that wondrous pattern
Of filial piety to after times.
Yes, princess, lead him forth; I'll point the path,
Whose soft declivity will guide your steps
To the deep vale, which these o'er-hanging rocks
Encompass round. You may convey him thence
To some safe shelter. Yet a moment's pause;
I must conceal your flight from every eye.
Yes, I will save them—Oh, returning virtue!
How big with joy one moment in thy service!
That wretched pair! I'll perish in their cause.
[*Exit.*
Evan. Whither, oh! whither shall Evander go?
I am at the goal of life; if in the race
Honour has followed with no lingering step,
But there sits smiling with her laurelled wreath
To crown my brow, there would I fain make halt,
And not inglorious lay me down to rest.
Euph. And will you then refuse, when thus the gods
Afford a refuge to thee?
Evan. Oh! my child!
There is no refuge for me.
Euph. Pardon, sir:
Euphrasia's care has formed a safe retreat;
There may'st thou dwell; it will not long be wanted.
Soon shall Timoleon, with resistless force,
Burst yon devoted walls.
Evan. Timoleon!
Euph. Yes,
The brave Timoleon, with the power of Greece;
Another day shall make the city his.
Evan. Timoleon come to vindicate my rights!
Oh! thou shalt reign in Sicily! my child
Shall grace her father's throne. Indulgent Heaven!
Pour down your blessings on this best of daughters;
To her and Phocion give Evander's crown;
Let them, oh! let them both in virtue wear it,
And in due time transmit it to their boy!

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. All things are apt; the drowsy centinel
Lies hushed in sleep; I'll marshal thee the way
Down the steep rock.
Euph. Oh! let us quickly hence!
Evan. The blood but loiters in these frozen veins.
Do you, whose youthful spirit glows with life,
Do you go forth and leave this mouldering corpse.
To me had Heaven decreed a longer date,
It ne'er had suffered a fell monster's reign,
Nor let me see the carnage of my people.
Farewell, Euphrasia; in one loved embrace
To these remains pay the last obsequies,
And leave me here to sink to silent dust.
Euph. And will you, then, on self-destruction bent,
Reject my prayer, nor trust your fate with me?
Evan. Trust thee, Euphrasia? Trust in thee, my child?
Though life's a burden I could well lay down,
Yet I will prize it, since bestowed by thee.
Oh! thou art good; thy virtue soars a flight
For the wide world to wonder at; in thee—
Hear it all nature, future ages hear it—
The father finds a parent in his child! [*Exeunt*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A rampart near the harbour.*

Enter MELANTHON *and* PHILOTAS.

Melan. AND lives he still?
Phil. He does; and kindly aliment
Renews the springs of life.
Melan. And doth he know
The glorious work the destinies prepare?
Phil. He is informed of all.
Melan. That Greek Timoleon
Comes his deliverer, and the fell usurper
Pants in the last extreme?
Phil. The glorious tidings
Have reached his ear.
Melan. Lead on, propitious powers,
Your great design! second the Grecian arms,
And whelm the sons of Carthage in the deep.
Phil. This hour decides their doom; and lo! Euphrasia
Stands on the jutting rock, that rock, where oft
Whole days she sat in pensive sorrow fixed,
And swelled, with streaming tears, the restless deep.
There, now with other sentiments elate,
She views Timoleon, with victorious prow,
Glide through the waves, and sees the scattered navy
Of Carthage fly before him.
Melan. Blest event!
Evander, if thou mock'st me not, shall live

Once more to see the justice of the gods.
But wilt thou still protect my royal master?
Wilt thou admit me to his wished-for presence?
Phil. Let it suffice that no assassin's aim
Can now assault him: I must hence, Melanthon;
I now must mingle with the tyrant's train,
And, with a semblance of obsequious duty,
Delude suspicion's eye: My friend, farewell.
[*Exit.*
Melan. If he deceive me not with specious hopes,
I shall behold the sovereign, in whose service
These temples felt the iron casque of war,
And these white hairs have silvered o'er my head.

Enter EUPHRASIA.

Euph. See there; behold them; lo! the fierce encounter!
He rushes on; the ocean flames around
With the bright flash of arms; the echoing hills
Rebellow to the roar.
Melan. The gods are with us,
And victory is ours.
Euph. High on the stern
The Grecian leaders stand: they stem the surge;
Launched from their arm the missive lightnings fly,
And the Barbaric fleet is wrapt in fire.
And lo! yon bark, down in the roaring gulph;
And there, more, more are perishing—Behold!
They plunge, for ever lost.
Melan. So perish all,
Who from yon continent unfurl their sails,
To shake the freedom of this sea-girt isle!
Euph. Did I not say, Melanthon, did I not
Presage the glories of Timoleon's triumph!
Where now are Afric's sons? The vanquished tyrant
Shall look aghast; his heart shall shrink appalled,
And dread his malefactions! Worse than famine,
Despair shall fasten on him!

Enter DIONYSIUS, CALIPPUS, *&c.*

Dion. Base deserters!
Curse on their Punic faith! Did they once dare
To grapple with the Greek? Ere yet the main
Was tinged with blood, they turned their ships averse.
May storms and tempests follow in their rear,
And dash their fleet upon the Libyan shore!

Enter CALIPPUS.

Cal. My liege, Timoleon, where the harbour opens,
Has stormed the forts, and even now his fleet
Pursues its course, and steers athwart the bay.
Dion. Ruin impends; and yet, if fall it must,
I bear a mind to meet it, undismayed,
Unconquered even by fate.
Cal. Through every street
Despair and terror fly. A panic spreads
From man to man, and superstition sees
Jove armed with thunder, and the gods against us.
Dion. With sacred rites their wrath must be appeased.
Let instant victims at the altar bleed;
Let incense roll its fragrant clouds to heaven,
And pious virgins, and the matron train,
In slow procession to the temple bear
The image of their gods.
Euph. Ha!—Does the tyrant
Dare, with unhallowed step, with crimes and guilt,
Approach the sacred fane?—Alas! my father,
Where now thy sanctuary? What place shall hide
Thy persecuted virtue? [*Aside.*
Dion. Thou, Euphrasia,
Lead forth the pious band. This very moment
Issue our orders.
Euph. With consenting heart,
Euphrasia goes to waft her prayers to Heaven.
[*Exit.*
Dion. The solemn sacrifice, the virgin throng,
Will gain the popular belief, and kindle
In the fierce soldiery religious rage.
Away, my friends, prepare the sacred rites.
[*Exit Calippus, &c.*
Philotas, thou draw near: how fares your prisoner?
Has he yet breathed his last?
Phil. Life ebbs apace;
To-morrow's sun sees him a breathless corse.
Dion. Curse on his lingering pangs! Sicilia's crown
No more shall deck his brow; and if the sand
Still loiter in the glass, thy hand, my friend,
May shake it thence.
Phil. It shall, dread sir; that task
Leave to thy faithful servant.
Dion. Oh! Philotas,
Thou little know'st the cares, the pangs of empire.
The ermined pride, the purple, that adorns
A conqueror's breast, but serves, my friend, to hide
A heart that's torn, that's mangled with remorse.
Each object round me wakens horrid doubts;
The flattering train, the centinel that guards me,
The slave that waits, all give some new alarm,
And from the means of safety dangers rise.
Even victory itself plants anguish here,
And round my laurels the fell serpent twines.
Phil. Would Dionysius abdicate his crown,
And sue for terms of peace?
Dion. Detested thought!
No, though ambition teem with countless ills,
It still has charms of power to fire the soul.
Though horrors multiply around my head,
I will oppose them all. The pomp of sacrifice,
But now ordained, is mockery to Heaven.
'Tis vain, 'tis fruitless; then let daring guilt

Be my inspirer, and consummate all.
Where are those Greeks, the captives of my sword,
Whose desperate valour rushed within our walls,
Fought near our person, and the pointed lance
Aimed at my breast?

Phil. In chains they wait their doom.

Dion. Give me to see them; bring the slaves before me.

Phil. What, ho! Melanthon!—this way lead your prisoners.

Enter MELANTHON, *with* PHOCION, *disguised as a Greek Officer, and Soldiers.*

Dion. Assassins, and not warriors! do ye come,
When the wide rage of battle claims your sword,
Thus do you come against a single life
To wage the war? Did not our buckler ring
With all your darts, in one collected volley,
Showered on my head? Did not your swords at once
Point at my breast, and thirst for regal blood?

Greek Offi. We sought thy life. I am by birth a Greek.
An open foe, in arms, I meant to slay
The foe of human kind. With rival ardour
We took the field; one voice, one mind, one heart;
All leagued, all covenanted: in yon camp
Spirits there are who aim, like us, at glory.
Whene'er you sally forth, whene'er the Greeks
Shall scale your walls, prepare thee to encounter
A like assault. By me the youth of Greece
Thus notify the war they mean to wage.

Dion. Thus, then, I warn them of my great revenge.
Whoe'er in battle shall become our prisoner,
In torment meets his doom.

Greek Offi. Then wilt thou see
How vile the body to a mind that pants
For genuine glory. Twice three hundred Greeks
Have sworn, like us, to hunt thee through the ranks;
Ours the first lot; we've failed; on yonder plain
Appear in arms, the faithful band will meet thee.

Dion. Vile slave, no more. Melanthon, drag them hence
To die in misery. Impaled alive,
The winds shall parch them on the craggy cliff.
Selected from the rest, let one depart
A messenger to Greece, to tell the fate
Her chosen sons, her first adventurers met.

[*Exit.*

Melan. Unhappy men! how shall my care protect
Your forfeit lives? Philotas, thou conduct them
To the deep dungeon's gloom. In that recess,
Midst the wild tumult of eventful war,
We may ward off the blow. My friends, farewell:
That officer will guide your steps.

[*All follow Philotas, except Phocion.*

Pho. Disguised
Thus in a soldier's garb, he knows me not.
Melanthon!

Melan. Ha!—Those accents!—Phocion here?

Pho. Yes, Phocion here! Speak, quickly tell me, say,
How fares Euphrasia?

Melan. Ha! beware—Philotas,
Conduct those prisoners hence; this soldier here
Shall bear the tidings to Timoleon's camp.

Pho. Oh! satisfy my doubts; how fares Euphrasia?

Melan. Euphrasia lives, and fills the anxious moments
With every virtue. Wherefore venture hither?
Why with rash valour penetrate our gates?

Pho. Could I refrain? Oh! could I tamely wait
The event of lingering war? With patience count
The lazy-pacing hours, while here in Syracuse
The tyrant keeps all that my heart holds dear?
For her dear sake, all dangers sink before me;
For her I burst the barriers of the gate,
Where the deep caverned rocks afford a passage.
A hundred chosen Greeks pursued my steps;
We forced an entrance; the devoted guard
Fell victims to our rage; but, in that moment,
Down from the walls superior numbers came.
The tyrant led them on. We rushed upon him,
If we could reach his heart, to end the war.
But Heaven thought otherwise. Melanthon, say—
I fear to ask it—lives Evander still?

Melan. Alas! he lives, imprisoned in the rock.
Thou must withdraw thee hence; regain once more
Timoleon's camp; alarm his slumbering rage;
Assail the walls; thou, with thy phalanx, seek
The subterraneous path; that way at night
The Greeks may enter, and let in destruction
To the great work of vengeance.

Pho. Wouldst thou have me
Basely retreat, while my Euphrasia trembles
Here on the ridge of peril? She, perhaps,
May fall unknown, unpitied, undistinguished,
Amidst the general carnage. Shall I leave her
To add that beauty to the purple heap?
No; I will seek her in these walls accurst,
Even in the tyrant's palace; save that life,
My only source of joy; that life, whose loss
Would make all Greece complotter in a murder,
And damn a righteous cause.

Melan. Yet hear the voice
Of sober age. Should Dionysius' spies
Detect thee here, ruin involves us all:
'Twere best retire, and seek Timoleon's tents;
Tell him, dismay and terror fill the city;
Even now in Syracuse the tyrant's will
Ordains with pomp oblations to the gods.
His deadly hand still hot with recent blood,
The monster dares approach the sacred altar:
Thy voice may rouse Timoleon to the assault,
And bid him storm the works.

Pho. By heaven I will;
My breath shall wake his rage; this very night,
When sleep sits heavy on the slumbering city,
Then Greece unsheathes her sword, and great revenge
Shall stalk with death and horror o'er the ranks
Of slaughtered troops, a sacrifice to freedom!
But first let me behold Euphrasia.
Melan. Hush
Thy pent up valour: to a secret haunt
I'll guide thy steps: there dwell, and in apt time
I'll bring Euphrasia to thy longing arms.
Pho. Wilt thou?
Melan. By Heaven I will; another act
Of desperate fury might endanger all.
The tyrant's busy guards are posted round;
In silence follow; thou shalt see Euphrasia.
Pho. Oh! lead me to her; that exalted virtue
With firmer nerve shall bid me grasp the javelin,
Shall bid my sword, with more than lightning's swiftness,
Blaze in the front of war, and glut its rage
With blows repeated in the tyrant's veins.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Temple, with a monument in the middle.*

Enter EUPHRASIA, ERIXENE, *and other female attendants.*

Euph. This way, my virgins, this way bend your steps.
Lo! the sad sepulchre, where, hearsed in death,
The pale remains of my dear mother lie.
There, while the victims at yon altar bleed,
And with your prayers the vaulted roof resounds,
There, let me pay the tribute of a tear,
A weeping pilgrim o'er Eudocia's ashes.
Erix. Forbear, Euphrasia, to renew your sorrows.
Euph. My tears have dried their source; then let me here
Pay this sad visit to the honoured clay
That moulders in the tomb. These sacred viands
I'll burn, an offering to a parent's shade,
And sprinkle with this wine the hallowed mould.
That duty paid, I will return, my virgins.
[*She goes into the tomb.*
Erix. Look down, propitious powers! behold that virtue,
And heal the pangs that desolate her soul.

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. Mourn, mourn, ye virgins; rend your scattered garments;
Some dread calamity hangs o'er our heads.
In vain the tyrant would appease with sacrifice
The impending wrath of ill-requited Heaven.
Ill omens hover o'er us: at the altar
The victim dropt, ere the divining seer
Had gored his knife. The brazen statues tremble,
And from the marble drops of blood distil.
Erix. Now, ye just gods, if vengeance you prepare,
Now find the guilty head!
Phil. Amidst the throng
A matron labours with the inspiring god;
She stares, she raves, and, with no mortal sound,
Proclaims around—'Where, Phœbus, am I borne?
'I see their glittering spears; I see them charge;
'Bellona wades in blood; that mangled body,
'Deformed with wounds and weltering in its gore,
'I know it well; Oh! close the dreadful scene!
'Relieve me, Phœbus! I have seen too much.'
Erix. Alas! I tremble for Evander's fate.
Avert the omen, gods, and guard his life!

Enter EUPHRASIA *from the tomb.*

Euph. Virgins, I thank you—Oh! more lightly now
My heart expands; the pious act is done,
And I have paid my tribute to a parent.
Ah! wherefore does the tyrant bend this way?
Phil. He flies the altar; leaves the unfinished rites.
No God there smiles propitious on his cause.
Fate lifts the awful balance; weighs his life,
The lives of numbers, in the trembling scale.
Euph. Despair and horror mark his haggard looks,
His wild, disordered step—He rushes forth;
Some new alarm demands him! Even now
He issues at yon portal! Lo! see there,
The suppliant crowd disperses; wild with fear,
Distraction in each look, the wretched throng
Pours through the brazen gates—Do you retire,
Retire, Philotas; let me here remain,
And give the moments of suspended fate
To pious worship and to filial love.
Phil. Alas! I fear to yield: awhile I'll leave thee,
And at the temple's entrance wait thy coming.
[*Exit.*
Euph. Now, then, Euphrasia, now thou may'st indulge
The purest ecstacy of soul. Come forth,
Thou man of woe, thou man of every virtue!

Enter EVANDER *from the monument.*

Evan. And does the grave thus cast me up again,
With a fond father's love to view thee? Thus
To mingle rapture in a daughter's arms?
Euph. How fares my father now?
Evan. Thy aid, Euphrasia,
Has given new life. Thou, from this vital stream
Derivest thy being; with unheard-of duty
Thou hast repaid it to thy native source.
Euph. Sprung from Evander, if a little portion

Of all his goodness dwell within my heart,
Thou wilt not wonder.
Evan. Joy and wonder rise
In mixed emotions! Though departing hence,
After the storms of a tempestuous life,
Though I was entering the wished-for port,
Where all is peace, all bliss, and endless joy,
Yet here contented I can linger still,
To view thy goodness, and applaud thy deeds,
Thou author of my life! Did ever parent
Thus call his child before? My heart's too full;
My old fond heart runs o'er; it aches with joy.
Euph. Alas, too much you over-rate your daughter;
Nature and duty called me—Oh! my father,
How didst thou bear thy long, long sufferings? How
Endure their barbarous rage?
Evan. My foes but did
To this old frame, what Nature's hand must do.
In the worst hour of pain, a voice still whispered me,
Rouse thee, Evander; self-acquitting conscience
Declares thee blameless, and the gods behold thee.
I was but going hence, by mere decay,
To that futurity which Plato taught,
Where the immortal spirit views the planets
Roll round the mighty year, and, wrapt in bliss,
Adores the ideas of the eternal mind.
Thither, oh! thither was Evander going,
But thou recall'st me; thou!
Euph. Timoleon too
Invites thee back to life.
Evan. And does he still
Urge on the siege?
Euph. His active genius comes
To scourge a guilty race. The Punic fleet,
Half lost, is swallowed by the roaring sea.
The shattered refuse seek the Libyan shore,
To bear the news of their defeat to Carthage.
Evan. These are thy wonders, Heaven! Abroad thy spirit
Moves o'er the deep, and mighty fleets are vanished.
Euph. Ha!—hark!—what noise is that? It comes this way;
Some busy footstep beats the hallowed pavement.
Oh! Sir, retire—Ye powers!—Philotas!—ha!

Enter PHILOTAS.

Phil. For thee, Euphrasia, Dionysius calls.
Some new suspicion goads him. At yon gate
I stopt Calippus, as with eager haste
He bent this way to seek thee.—Oh! my sovereign,
My king, my injured master, will you pardon
The wrongs I've done thee? [*Kneels to Evander.*
Evan. Virtue such is thine,
From the fierce trial of tyrannic power,
Shines forth with added lustre.
Phil. Oh! forgive
My ardent zeal; there is no time to waste.
You must withdraw; trust to your faithful friends.
Pass but another day, and Dionysius
Falls from a throne usurped.
Evan. But ere he pays
The forfeit of his crimes, what streams of blood
Shall flow in torrents round! Methinks I might
Prevent this waste of nature—I'll go forth,
And to my people shew their rightful king.
Euph. Banish that thought; forbear; the rash attempt
Were fatal to our hopes; oppressed, dismayed,
The people look aghast, and, wan with fear,
None will espouse your cause.
Evan. Yes, all will dare
To act like men;—their king, I gave myself
To a whole people. I made no reserve;
My life was theirs; each drop about my heart
Pledged to the public cause; devoted to it:
That was my compact; is the subject's less?
If they are all debased, and willing slaves,
The young but breathing to grow grey in bondage,
And the old sinking to ignoble graves,
Of such a race no matter who is king.
And yet I will not think it; no! my people
Are brave and generous; I will trust their valour.
Euph. Yet stay; yet be advised.
Phil. As yet, my liege,
No plan is fixed, and no concerted measure.
The fates are busy: wait the vast event.
Trust to my truth and honour. Witness, gods,
Here, in the temple of Olympian Jove,
Philotas swears——
Evan. Forbear: the man like thee,
Who feels the best emotions of the heart,
Truth, reason, justice, honour's fine excitements,
Acts by those laws, and wants no other sanction.
Euph. Again the alarm approaches; sure destruction
To thee, to all, will follow:—hark! a sound
Comes hollow murmuring through the vaulted aisle.
It gains upon the ear. Withdraw, my father!
All's lost if thou art seen.
Phil. And, lo! Calippus
Darts with the lightning's speed across the aisle.
Evan. Thou at the senate-house convene my friends.
Melanthon, Dion, and their brave associates,
Will shew that liberty has leaders still.
Anon I'll meet them there: my child, farewell;
Thou shalt direct me now.
Euph. Too cruel fate!
The tomb is all the mansion I can give;
My mother's tomb! [*Evander enters the tomb.*
Phil. You must be brief; the alarm
Each moment nearer comes. In every sound
Destruction threatens. Ha! by Heaven this way
Calippus comes——Let me retard his speed.
[*Exit.*

Euph. [*Coming forward.*] How my distracted heart throbs wild with fear!
What brings Calippus? wherefore? save me Heaven!

Enter CALIPPUS.

Cal. This sullen musing in these drear abodes
Alarms suspicion: the king knows thy plottings,
Thy rooted hatred to the state and him.
His sovereign will commands thee to repair,
This moment, to his presence.

Euph. Ha! what means
The tyrant!——I obey [*Exit Calippus*] and, oh! ye powers,
Ye ministers of Heaven! defend my father;
Support his drooping age; and when anon
Avenging justice shakes her crimson steel,
Oh! be the grave, at least, a place of rest;
That, from his covert in the hour of peace,
Forth he may come to bless a willing people,
And be your own just image here on earth.
[*Exit.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

Enter MELANTHON *and* PHILOTAS.

Mel. AWAY! no more; pernicious, vile dissembler!
Phil. Wherefore this frantic rage?
Melan. Thou canst not varnish,
With thy perfidious arts, a crime like this.
I climbed the rugged cliff; but, oh! thou traitor,
Where is Evander! Through each dungeon's gloom
I sought the good old king: the guilt is thine;
May vengeance wait thee for it!
Phil. Still, Melanthon,
Let prudence guide thee.
Melan. Thou hast plunged thee down
Far as the lowest depth of hell-born crimes;
Thou hast out-gone all registers of guilt;
Beyond all fable hast thou sinned, Philotas.
Phil. By Heaven thou wrong'st me: didst thou know, old man——
Melan. Could not his reverend age, could not his virtue,
His woes unnumbered, soften thee to pity?
Thou hast destroyed my king.
Phil. Yet wilt thou hear me?
Your king still lives.
Melan. Thou vile deceiver!—Lives!
But where! Away; no more. I charge thee, leave me.
Phil. We have removed him to a sure asylum.
Melan. Removed!—Thou traitor! what dark privacy——
Why move him thence? The vile assassin's stab
Has closed his days—calm, unrelenting villain!
I know it all.
Phil. By every power above,
Evander lives; in safety lives. Last night,
When in his dark embrace sleep wrapt the world,
Euphrasia came, a spectacle of woe;
Dared to approach our guard, and with her tears,
With vehemence of grief, she touched my heart.
I gave her father to her.
Melan. How, Philotas!
If thou dost not deceive me——
Phil. No, by Heaven!
By every power above—But hark! those notes
Speak Dionysius near: anon, my friend,
I'll tell thee each particular; thy king,
Mean while, is safe—but lo! the tyrant comes;
With guilt like his I must equivocate,
And teach even truth and honour to dissemble.

Enter DIONYSIUS, CALIPPUS, *&c.*

Dion. Away each vain alarm; the sun goes down,
Nor yet Timoleon issues from his fleet.
There let him linger on the wave-worn beach;
Here, the vain Greek shall find another Troy,
A more than Hector here. Though Carthage fly,
Ourself, still Dionysius here remains.
And means the Greek to treat of terms of peace?
By Heaven, this panting bosom hoped to meet
His boasted phalanx on the embattled plain.
And doth he now, on peaceful councils bent,
Dispatch his herald?—Let the slave approach.

Enter the Herald.

Dion. Now, speak thy purpose; what doth Greece impart?
Her. Timoleon, sir, whose great renown in arms
Is equalled only by the softer virtues
Of mild humanity, that sway his heart,
Sends me, his delegate, to offer terms,
On which even foes may well accord; on which
The fiercest nature, though it spurn at justice,
May sympathise with his.
Dion. Unfold thy mystery;
Thou shalt be heard.
Her. The generous leader sees,
With pity sees, the wild destructive havock
Of ruthless war; he hath surveyed around
The heaps of slain that cover yonder field,
And, touched with generous sense of human woe,
Weeps o'er his victories.
Dion. Your leader weeps!
Then, let the author of those ills thou speak'st of,
Let the ambitious factor of destruction,

Timely retreat, and close the scene of blood.
Why doth affrighted peace behold his standard
Upreared in Sicily? and wherefore here
The iron ranks of war, from which the shepherd
Retires appalled, and leaves the blasted hopes
Of half the year, while closer to her breast
The mother clasps her infant?

Her. 'Tis not mine
To plead Timoleon's cause; not mine the office
To justify the strong, the righteous motives,
That urge him to the war: the only scope
My deputation aims at, is, to fix
An interval of peace, a pause of horror,
That they, whose bodies on the naked shore
Lie weltering in their blood, from either host
May meet the last sad rites to nature due,
And decent lie in honourable graves.

Dion. Go tell your leader, his pretexts are vain.
Let him, with those that live, embark for Greece,
And leave our peaceful plains; the mangled limbs
Of those he murdered, from my tender care
Shall meet due obsequies.

Her. The hero, sir,
Wages no war with those, who bravely die.
'Tis for the dead I supplicate; for them
We sue for peace: and to the living, too,
Timoleon would extend it; but the groans
Of a whole people have unsheathed his sword.
A single day will pay the funeral rites.
To-morrow's sun may see both armies meet
Without hostility, and all in honour;
You, to inter the troops, who bravely fell;
We, on our part, to give an humble sod
To those, who gained a footing on the isle,
And by their death have conquered.

Dion. Be it so;
I grant thy suit: soon as to-morrow's dawn
Illume the world, the rage of wasting war
In vain shall thirst for blood: but mark my words;
If the next orient sun behold you here,
That hour shall see me, terrible in arms,
Deluge yon plain, and let destruction loose.
Thou know'st my last resolve, and now, farewell.
Some careful officer conduct him forth.

[*Exit Herald.*

By Heaven, the Greek hath offered to my sword
An easy prey; a sacrifice to glut
My great revenge. Calippus, let each soldier,
This night, resign his wearied limbs to rest,
That ere the dawn, with renovated strength,
On the unguarded, unsuspecting foe,
Disarmed, and bent on superstitious rites,
From every quarter we may rush undaunted,
Give the invaders to the deathful steel,
And, by one carnage, bury all in ruin.
My valiant friends, haste to your several posts,
And let this night a calm unruffled spirit
Lie hushed in sleep: away, my friends, disperse!
Philotas, waits Euphrasia, as we ordered?

Phil. She's here at hand.

Dion. Admit her to our presence.
Rage and despair, a thousand warring passions,
All rise, by turns, and piecemeal rend my heart.
Yet every means, all measures must be tried,
To sweep the Grecian spoiler from the land,
And fix the crown, unshaken, on my brow.

Enter EUPHRASIA.

Euph. What sudden cause requires Euphrasia's presence?

Dion. Approach, fair mourner, and dispel thy fears.
Thy grief, thy tender duty to thy father,
Has touched me nearly. In his lone retreat,
Respect, attendance, every lenient care
To soothe affliction, and extend his life,
Evander has commanded.

Euph. Vile dissembler!
Detested homicide! [*Aside.*]—And has thy heart
Felt for the wretched?

Dion. Urgencies of state
Abridged his liberty; but, to his person
All honour hath been paid.

Euph. The righteous gods
Have marked thy ways, and will in time repay
Just retribution.

Dion. If to see your father,
If here to meet him in a fond embrace,
Will calm thy breast, and dry those beauteous tears,
A moment more shall bring him to your presence.

Euph. Ha! lead him hither! Sir, to move him now,
Aged, infirm, worn out with toil and years—
No, let me seek him rather—If soft pity
Has touched your heart, oh! send me, send me to him!

Dion. Controul this wild alarm; with prudent care
Philotas shall conduct him; here I grant
The tender interview.

Euph. Disastrous fate!
Ruin impends!—This will discover all;
I'll perish first; provoke his utmost rage. [*Aside.*
Though much I languish to behold my father,
Yet now it were not fit—the sun goes down;
Night falls apace; soon as returning day—

Dion. This night, this very hour, you both must meet.
Together, you may serve the state and me.
Thou see'st the havock of wide wasting war;
And more, full well you know, are still to bleed.
Thou may'st prevent their fate.

Euph. Oh! give the means,
And I will bless thee for it.

Dion. From a Greek,
Torments have wrung the truth. Thy husband, Phocion—

Euph. Oh! say, speak of my Phocion!

Dion. He; 'tis he
Hath kindled up this war; with treacherous arts
Inflamed the states of Greece, and now the traitor
Comes, with a foreign aid, to wrest my crown.

Euph. And does my Phocion share Timoleon's glory?
Dion. With him invests our walls, and bids rebellion
Erect her standard here.
Euph. Oh! bless him, gods!
Where'er my hero treads the paths of war,
List on his side; against the hostile javelin
Uprear his mighty buckler; to his sword
Lend the fierce whirlwind's rage, that he may come
With wreaths of triumph, and with conquest crowned,
And his Euphrasia spring with rapture to him,
Melt in his arms, and a whole nation's voice
Applaud my hero with a love like mine!
Dion. Ungrateful fair! Has not our sovereign will
On thy descendants fixed Sicilia's crown?
Have I not vowed protection to your boy?
Euph. From thee the crown! From thee! Euphrasia's children
Shall on a nobler basis found their rights;
On their own virtue, and a people's choice.
Dion. Misguided woman!
Euph. Ask of thee protection!
The father's valour shall protect his boy.
Dion. Rush not on sure destruction; ere too late,
Accept our proffered grace. The terms are these:
Instant send forth a message to your husband;
Bid him draw off his Greeks, unmoor his fleet,
And measure back his way. Full well he knows
You and your father are my hostages;
And for his treason both may answer.
Euph. Think'st thou, then,
So meanly of my Phocion?——Dost thou deem him
Poorly wound up to a mere fit of valour,
To melt away in a weak woman's tear?
Oh! thou dost little know him: know'st but little
Of his exalted soul. With generous ardour
Still will he urge the great, the glorious plan,
And gain the ever honoured, bright reward,
Which fame entwines around the patriot's brow,
And bids for ever flourish on his tomb,
For nations freed, and tyrants laid in dust.
Dion. By Heaven! this night Evander breathes his last!
Euph. Better for him to sink at once to rest,
Than linger thus beneath the gripe of famine,
In a vile dungeon, scooped, with barbarous skill,
Deep in the flinty rock; a monument
Of that fell malice, and that black suspicion,
That marked your father's reign; a dungeon drear
Prepared for innocence!—Vice lived secure,
It flourished, triumphed, grateful to his heart;
'Twas virtue only could give umbrage; then,
In that black period, to be great and good
Was a state crime; the powers of genius, then,
Were a constructive treason.
Dion. Ha! beware,
Nor with vile calumny provoke my rage.
Euph. Whate'er was laudable, whate'er was worthy,
Sunk under foul oppression; freeborn men
Were torn in private from their household gods,
Shut from the light of heaven in caverned cells,
Chained to the grunsel edge, and left to pine
In bitterness of soul; while, in the vaulted roof,
The tyrant sat, and, through a secret channel,
Collected every sound; heard each complaint
Of martyred virtue; kept a register
Of sighs and groans by cruelty extorted;
Noted the honest language of the heart;
Then on the victims wreaked his murderous rage,
For yielding to the feelings of their nature.
Dion. Obdurate woman! obstinate in ill!
Here ends all parley. Now your father's doom
Is fixed, irrevocably fixed.
Euph. Thy doom, perhaps,
May first be fixed: the doom that ever waits
The fell oppressor, from a throne usurped
Hurled headlong down. Think of thy father's fate
At Corinth, Dionysius!
Dion. Ha! this night
Evander dies; and thou, detested fair!
Thou shalt behold him, while inventive cruelty
Pursues his wearied life through every nerve.
I scorn all dull delay. This very night
Shall sate my great revenge. [*Exit.*
Euph. This night, perhaps,
Shall whelm thee down, no more to blast creation.
My father, who inhabit'st with the dead,
Now let me seek thee in the lonely tomb,
And tremble there with anxious hope and fear.
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The inside of the Temple.*

Enter PHOCION *and* MELANTHON.

Pho. Each step I move, a grateful terror shakes
My frame to dissolution.
Melan. Summon all
Thy wonted firmness; in that dreary vault
A living king is numbered with the dead.
I'll take my post, near where the pillared aisle
Supports the central dome, that no alarm
Surprise you in the pious act. [*Exit.*
Pho. If here
They both are found; if, in Evander's arms,
Euphrasia meets my search, the fates atone
For all my sufferings, all afflictions past.
Yes, I will seek them—ha!—the gaping tomb
Invites my steps—Now be propitious, Heaven!
[*He enters the tomb.*

Enter EUPHRASIA.

Euph. All hail, ye caves of horror!——In this gloom
Divine content can dwell, the heartfelt tear,
Which, as it falls, a father's trembling hand
Will catch, and wipe the sorrows from my eye.

Thou Power supreme! whose all pervading mind
Guides this great frame of things; who now beheld'st me,
Who, in that cave of death, art full as perfect
As in the gorgeous palace, now, while night
Broods o'er the world, I'll to thy sacred shrine,
And supplicate thy mercies to my father.
Who's there?—Evander?—Answer—tell me—speak——

Enter PHOCION, *from the Tomb.*

Pho. What voice is that?—Melanthon!
Euph. Ha! those sounds——
Speak of Evander! tell me that he lives,
Or lost Euphrasia dies.
Pho. Heart-swelling transport!
Art thou Euphrasia? 'Tis thy Phocion, love;
Thy husband comes.
Euph. Support me! reach thy hand!
Pho. Once more I clasp her in this fond embrace!
Euph. What miracle has brought thee to me?
Pho. Love
Inspired my heart, and guided all my ways.
Euph. Oh! thou dear wanderer! But wherefore here?
Why in this place of woe? My tender little one,
Say, is he safe? oh! satisfy a mother;
Speak of my child, or I grow wild at once!
Tell me his fate, and tell me all thy own.
Pho. Your boy is safe, Euphrasia; lives to reign
In Sicily; Timoleon's generous care
Protects him in his camp; dispel thy fears;
The gods once more will give him to thy arms.
Euph. My father lives sepulchred, ere his time,
Here in Eudocia's tomb; let me conduct thee.
Pho. I came this moment thence.
Euph. And saw Evander?
Pho. Alas! I found him not.
Euph. Not found him there?
And have they, then—have the fell murderers—Oh! [*Faints away.*
Pho. I've been too rash; revive, my love, revive!
Thy Phocion calls; the gods will guard Evander,
And save him, to reward thy matchless virtue.

Enter EVANDER *and* MELANTHON.

Evan. Lead me, Melanthon, guide my aged steps:
Where is he? Let me see him.
Pho. My Euphrasia!
Thy father lives!—Thou venerable man!
Behold—I cannot fly to thy embrace!
Euph. These agonies must end me; ah, my father!
Again I have him; gracious Powers! again
I clasp his hand, and bathe it with my tears!
Evan. Euphrasia! Phocion too! Yes, both are here;
Oh! let me thus, thus strain you to my heart.
Pho. Protected by a daughter's tender care,
By my Euphrasia saved! That sweet reflection
Exalts the bliss to rapture.
Euph. Why, my father,
Why thus adventure forth? The strong alarm
O'erwhelmed my spirits.
Evan. I went forth, my child,
When all was dark, and awful silence round,
To throw me prostrate at the altar's foot,
And crave the care of Heaven for thee and thine.
Melanthon there——

Enter PHILOTAS.

Euph. Philotas! ha! what means——
Phil. Inevitable ruin hovers o'er you!
The tyrant's fury mounts into a blaze;
Unsated yet with blood, he calls aloud
For thee, Evander; thee his rage hath ordered
This moment to his presence.
Evan. Lead me to him:
His presence hath no terror for Evander.
Euph. Horror! it must not be.
Phil. No; never, never!
I'll perish rather. But the time demands
Our utmost vigour; with the lightning's speed
Decisive, rapid. With the scorpion stings
Of conscience lashed, despair and horror seize him,
And guilt but serves to goad his tortured mind
To blacker crimes. His policy has granted
A day's suspense from arms; yet even now
His troops prepare, in the dead midnight hour,
With base surprise, to storm Timoleon's camp.
Evan. And doth he grant a false, insidious truce,
To turn the hour of peace to blood and horror?
Euph. I know the monster well: when specious seeming
Becalms his looks, the rankling heart within
Teems with destruction. Like our mount Ætna,
When the deep snows invest his hoary head,
And a whole winter gathers on his brow,
Looking tranquillity; even then, beneath,
The fuelled entrails summon all their rage,
Till the affrighted shepherd round him sees
The sudden ruin, the vulcano's burst,
Mountains hurled up in air, and molten rocks,
And all the land with desolation covered.
Melan. Now, Phocion, now, on thee our hope depends.
Fly to Timoleon; I can grant a passport:
Rouze him to vengeance; on the tyrant turn
His own insidious arts, or all is lost.
Pho. Evander, thou, and thou, my best Euphrasia,
Both shall attend my flight.
Melan. It were in vain;
The attempt would hazard all.
Euph. Together, here,
We will remain, safe in the cave of death;
And wait our freedom from thy conquering arm.

Evan. Oh! would the gods roll back the stream of time,
And give this arm the sinew that it boasted
At Tauromenium, when its force resistless
Mowed down the ranks of war; I then might guide
The battle's rage, and, ere Evander die,
Add still another laurel to my brow.
Euph. Enough of laurelled victory your sword
Hath reaped in earlier days.
Evan. And shall my sword,
When the great cause of liberty invites,
Remain inactive, unperforming quite?
Youth, second youth rekindles in my veins:
Though worn with age, this arm will know its office;
Will shew that victory has not forgot
Acquaintance with this hand. And yet—O shame!
It will not be: the momentary blaze
Sinks, and expires: I have survived it all;
Survived my reign, my people, and myself.
Euph. Fly, Phocion, fly; Melanthon will conduct thee.
Melan. And when the assault begins, my faithful cohorts
Shall form their ranks around this sacred dome.
Pho. And my poor captive friends, my brave companions
Taken in battle, wilt thou guard their lives?
Melan. Trust to my care: no danger shall assail them.
Pho. By Heaven, the glorious expectation swells
This panting bosom! Yes, Euphrasia, yes;
Awhile I leave you to the care of Heaven.
Fell Dionysius, tremble! ere the dawn
Timoleon thunders at your gates; the rage,
The pent-up rage of twenty thousand Greeks,
Shall burst at once, and the tumultuous roar
Alarm the astonished world. The brazen gates
Asunder shall be rent; the towers, the ramparts,
Shall yield to Grecian valour; death and rage
Through the wide city's round shall wade in gore,
And guilty men awake to gasp their last.
Melanthon, come.
Evan. Yet, ere thou goest, young man,
Attend my words: though guilt may oft provoke,
As now it does, just vengeance on its head,
In mercy punish it. The rage of slaughter
Can add no trophy to the victor's triumph;
Bid him not shed unnecessary blood.
Conquest is proud, inexorable, fierce;
It is humanity ennobles all.
So thinks Evander, and so tell Timoleon.
Pho. Farewell; the midnight hour shall give you freedom.
[*Exit with Melanthon and Philotas.*
Euph. Ye guardian deities, watch all his ways.
Evan. Come, my Euphrasia, in this interval
Together we will seek the sacred altar,
And thank the god, whose presence fills the dome,
For the best gift his bounty could bestow,
The virtue he has given thee; there we will pour
Our hearts in praise, in tears of adoration,
For all the wondrous goodness lavished on us.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Enter DIONYSIUS *and* CALIPPUS.

Dion. ERE the day closed, while yet the busy eye
Might view their camp, their stations, and their guards,
Their preparations for approaching night,
Didst thou then mark the motions of the Greeks?
Cal. From the watch-tower I saw them: all things spoke
A foe secure, and discipline relaxed.
Their arms thrown idly by, the soldiers strayed
To one another's tents; their steeds no more
Stood near at hand caparisoned for war;
And from the lines numbers poured out, to see
The spot where the besieged had sallied forth,
And the fierce battle raged; to view the slain,
That lie in heaps upon the crimson beach.
There, the fond brother, the afflicted father,
And the friend, sought some vestige of the face
Of him who died in battle; night came on;
Some slowly gained their tents: dispersed around
Whole parties loitered, touched with deep regret;
War, and its train of duties, all forgot.
Dion. Their folly gives them to my sword; are all
My orders issued?
Cal. All.
Dion. The troops retired,
To gain recruited vigour from repose?
Cal. The city round lies hushed in sleep.
Dion. Anon
Let each brave officer, of chosen valour,
Forsake his couch, and, with deliberate spirit,
Meet at the citadel. An hour at farthest
Before the dawn, 'tis fixed to storm their camp;
And whelm their men, their arms, and steeds and tents,
In one prodigious ruin. Haste, Calippus,
Fly to thy post, and bid Euphrasia enter.
[*Exit Calippus.*
Evander dies this night: Euphrasia, too,
Shall be disposed of. Curse on Phocion's fraud,
That from my power withdrew their infant boy.
In him the seeds of future kings were crushed,
And the whole hated line at once extinguished.

Enter EUPHRASIA.

Dion. Once more approach and hear me; 'tis not now
A time to waste in the vain war of words.
A crisis big with horror is at hand.
I meant to spare the stream of blood, that soon
Shall deluge yonder plains. My fair proposals
Thy haughty spirit has with scorn rejected.
And now, by Heaven, here, in thy very sight,
Evander breathes his last.
Euph. The truce you have granted,
Suspends the rage of war: mean time, send forth
The orators of peace with olive crowned.
Timoleon, good and just, and ever willing
To conquer rather by persuasive truth,
Than by devouring slaughter, will agree
In friendly parley to assert his rights,
And compromise the war.
Dion. And must I sue
For terms of peace? To an invader sue?
Since you, the fiend of Syracuse and Greece,
Since you thus urge me on to desperate daring,
Your father first—of him I'll be assured—
Your father meets his fate.
Euph. If yet there's wanting
A crime to fill the measure of thy guilt,
Add that black murder to the dreadful list;
With that complete the horrors of thy reign.
Dion. Woman, beware: Philotas is at hand,
And to our presence leads Evander. All
Thy dark complottings, and thy treacherous arts,
Have proved abortive.
Euph. Ha! What new event?
And is Philotas false? Has he betrayed him?
[*Aside.*
Dion. Evander's doom is sealed—What, ho! Philotas;
Now shalt thou see him die in pangs before thee.

Enter PHILOTAS.

Euph. How my heart sinks within me!
Dion. Where's your prisoner?
Phil. Evander is no more.
Dion. Ha! death has robbed me
Of half my great revenge.
Phil. Worn out with anguish,
I saw life ebb apace. With studied art,
We gave each cordial drop, alas! in vain;
He heaved a sigh; invoked his daughter's name,
Smiled, and expired.
Dion. Bring me his hoary head.
Phil. You'll pardon, sir, my over-hasty zeal.
I gave the body to the foaming surge,
Down the steep rock, despised.
Dion. Now rave and shriek,
And rend your scattered hair. No more Evander
Shall sway Sicilia's sceptre.
Euph. Mighty gods!
The hardened heart, the man elate with pride,
View with compassion! To the bad extend
Some portion of your mercy; crimes and blood
Have made their souls a seat of desolation,
Of woe, despair, and horror! Turn to them
An eye of pity: whom your bounty formed
To truth, to goodness, and to generous deeds,
On them no more from your bright stores of bliss
You need dispense: their virtue will support them.
Dion. Now, then, thou feelest my vengeance.
Euph. Glory in it;
Exult and triumph. The worst shaft is sped.
Yet still the unconquered mind with scorn can view thee;
With the calm sunshine of the breast can see
Thy power unequal to subdue the soul,
Which virtue formed, and which the gods protect.
Dion. Philotas, bear her hence; she shall not live.
This moment bear her hence; you know the rest.
Go, see our will obeyed; that done, with all
A warrior's speed, attend me at the citadel;
There meet the heroes, whom this night shall lead
To freedom, victory, to glorious havoc,
And the destruction of the Grecian name. [*Exit.*
Euph. Accept my thanks, Philotas; generous man!
These tears attest the emotions of my heart.
But oh! should Greece defer——
Phil. Dispel thy fears;
Phocion will bring relief; or should the tyrant
Assault their camp, he'll meet a marshalled foe.
Let me conduct thee to the silent tomb.
Euph. Ah! there Evander, naked and disarmed,
Defenceless quite, may meet some ruffian stroke.
Phil. Lo! here's a weapon: bear this dagger to him.
In the drear monument should hostile steps
Dare to approach him, they must enter singly;
This guards the passage; man by man they die.
There may'st thou dwell amidst the wild commotion.
Euph. Ye pitying gods, protect my father there! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Citadel.*

CALIPPUS *and several Officers.*

1*st. Offi.* What new event thus summons us together?
Cal. 'Tis great occasion calls; Timoleon's ardour
Comes rushing on; his works rise high in air,
Advance each day, and tower above our walls.
One brave exploit may free us—Lo! the king.

Enter DIONYSIUS.

Dion. Ye brave associates, who so oft have shared
Our toil and danger in the field of glory,
My fellow-warriors, what no god could promise,
Fortune hath given us. In his dark embrace
Lo! sleep envelops the whole Grecian camp.
Against a foe, the outcasts of their country,
Freebooters roving in pursuit of prey,
Success by war, or covert stratagem,
Alike is glorious. Then, my gallant friends,
What need of words? The generous call of freedom,
Your wives, your children, your invaded rights,
All that can steel the patriot breast with valour,
Expands and rouses in the swelling heart.
Follow the impulsive ardour; follow me,
Your king, your leader; in the friendly gloom
Of night, assault their camp; your country's love,
And fame eternal, shall attend the men,
Who marched through blood and horror, to redeem,
From the invader's power, their native land.
Cal. Lead to the onset; Greece shall find we bear
Hearts prodigal of blood, when honour calls,
Resolved to conquer or to die in freedom.
Dion. Thus I've resolved: when the declining moon
Hath veiled her orb, our silent march begins.
The order thus:—Calippus, thou lead forth
Iberia's sons, with the Numidian bands,
And line the shore. Perdiccas, be it thine
To march thy cohorts to the mountain's foot,
Where the wood skirts the valley; there make halt,
Till brave Amyntor stretch along the vale.
Ourself, with the embodied cavalry
Clad in their mailed cuirass, will circle round
To where their camp extends its furthest line;
Unnumbered torches there shall blaze, at once,
The signal of the charge; then, oh! my friends,
On every side let the wild uproar loose;
Bid massacre and carnage stalk around,
Unsparing, unrelenting; drench your swords
In hostile blood, and riot in destruction.

Enter an Officer.

Ha! speak; unfold thy purpose.
Offi. Instant arm;
To arms, my liege; the foe breaks in upon us;
The subterraneous path is theirs; that way
Their band invades the city, sunk in sleep.
Dion. Treason's at work; detested, treacherous villains!
Is this their promised truce? Away, my friends,
Rouse all the war; fly to your several posts,
And instant bring all Syracuse in arms.
[*Exeunt.—Warlike music.*

Enter MELANTHON.

Cal. Melanthon, now collect your faithful bands.
Melan. Do thou pursue the king; attend his steps:
Timoleon lords it in the captive city.
[*Exit Calippus.*

Enter PHILOTAS.

Melan. Philotas, vengeance has begun its work.
Phil. The gods have sent relief; dismay, and terror,
And wild amaze, and death in every shape,
Fill the affrighted city.
Melan. Tyrant, now
The inevitable hour of fate is come.
Philotas, round the dome that holds Evander
We will arrange our men; there fix our post,
And guard that spot, till, like some god, Timoleon
Still the wild uproar, and bid slaughter cease.
[*Exeunt.*

Enter DIONYSIUS.

Dion. Why sleep the coward slaves? All things conspire;
The gods are leagued; I see them raze my towers
My walls and bulwarks fall; and Neptune's trident
From its foundation heaves the solid rock.
Pallas directs the storm; her gorgon shield
Glares in my view, and from the fleet she calls
Her Greeks enraged. In arms I'll meet them all.
What, ho! my guards; arise, or wake no more.

Enter CALIPPUS.

Cal. This way, my liege; our friends, a valiant band,
Assemble here.
Dion. Give me to meet the Greek!
Our only safety lies in brave despair. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The inside of the temple. A monument in the middle.*

Enter EUPHRASIA, ERIXENE, *and female Attendants.*

Euph. Which way, Erixene, which way, my virgins,
Shall we direct our steps? What sacred altar
Clasp on our knees?
Erix. Alas! the horrid tumult
Spreads the destruction wide. On every side
The victor's shouts, the groans of murderde wretches,
In wild confusion rise. Once more descend
Eudocia's tomb; there thou may'st find a shelter.
Euph. Anon, Erixene, I mean to visit,
Perhaps, for the last time, a mother's urn.

This dagger there, this instrument of death,
Should fortune prosper the fell tyrant's arms,
This dagger, then, may free me from his power,
And that drear vault intomb us all in peace.
[*Puts up the dagger.*
Hark! how the uproar swells! Alas! what numbers
In Dionysius' cause shall yield their throats
To the destructive sword! Aloft I climbed
The temple's vaulted roof; the scene beneath
Is horrible to sight; the domes and palaces
Blaze to the sky; and where the flames forbear,
The Greeks, enraged, brandish the gleaming sword.
From the high roofs, to shun the raging fire,
Wretches precipitate their fall. But, oh!
No pause, no mercy; to the edge of the sword
They give their bodies; butchered, gashed with wounds,
They die in mangled heaps, and, with their limbs,
Cover the sanguine pavement.
Erix. Hark!
Euph. The din
Of arms with clearer sound advances. Hark!
That sudden burst! Again! They rush upon us!
The portal opens; lo! see there; behold!
War, horrid war invades the sacred fane;
No altar gives a sanctuary now. [*Warlike music.*

Enter DIONYSIUS *and* CALIPPUS, *with several Soldiers.*

Dion. Here will I mock their siege; here stand at bay,
And brave them to the last.
Cal. Our weary foes
Desist from the pursuit.
Dion. Though all betray me,
Though every god conspire, I will not yield.
If I must fall, the temple's ponderous roof,
The mansion of the gods combined against me,
Shall first be crushed, and lie in ruin with me.
Euphrasia here! Detested, treacherous woman!
For my revenge preserved! By Heaven 'tis well;
Vengeance awaits thy guilt, and this good sword
Thus sends thee to atone the bleeding victims,
This night has massacred.
Cal. [*Holding Dionysius's arm.*] My liege, forbear;
Her life preserved may plead your cause with Greece,
And mitigate your fate.
Dion. Presumptuous slave!
My rage is up in arms; by Heaven she dies!

Enter EVANDER *from the tomb.*

Evan. Horror! forbear! Thou murderer, hold thy hand!
The gods behold thee, horrible assassin!
Restrain the blow; it were a stab to Heaven;
All nature shudders at it! Will no friend
Arm, in a cause like this, a father's hand?
Strike at this bosom rather. Lo! Evander
Prostrate and grovelling on the earth before thee;
He begs to die; exhaust the scanty drops
That lag about his heart; but spare my child!
Dion. Evander!—Do my eyes once more behold him?
May the fiends seize Philotas! Treacherous slave!
'Tis well thou liv'st; thy death were poor revenge
From any hand but mine. [*Offers to strike.*
Euph. No, tyrant, no;
[*Rushing before Evander.*
I have provoked your vengeance; through this bosom
Open a passage; first on me, on me
Exhaust your fury; every power above
Commands thee to respect that aged head;
His withered frame wants blood to glut thy rage;
Strike here; these veins are full; here's blood enough;
The purple tide will gush to glad thy sight.
Dion. Amazement blasts and freezes every power!
They shall not live. Ha! the fierce tide of war
[*A flourish of trumpets.*
This way comes rushing on.
[*Goes to the stop of the stage.*
Euph. [*Embracing Evander.*] Oh! thus, my father,
We'll perish thus together.
Dion. Bar the gates;
Close every passage, and repel their force.
Evan. And must I see thee bleed? Oh! for a sword!
Bring, bring me daggers!
Dion. [*Advancing*] Guards, seize the slave,
And give him to my rage.
Evan. [*Seized by the guards.*] Oh! spare her, spare her!
Inhuman villains!
Euph. Now, one glorious effort!
Dion. Let me dispatch; thou traitor, thus my arm——
Euph. A daughter's arm, fell monster, strikes the blow. [*Stabs him.*
Yes, first she strikes; an injured daughter's arm
Sends thee devoted to the infernal gods.
[*He falls.*
Dion. Detested fiend! Thus by a woman's hand!
Euph. Yes, tyrant, yes; in a dear father's cause,
A woman's vengeance towers above her sex.
Dion. May curses blast thy arm! May Ætna's fires
Convulse the land; to its foundation shake
The groaning isle! May civil discord bear
Her flaming brand through all the realms of Greece;
And the whole race expire in pangs like mine!
[*Dies.*
Euph. Behold, all Sicily, behold! The point
Glows with the tyrant's blood. Ye slaves, [*To the guards.*] look there!

†

Kneel to your rightful king: the blow for freedom
Gives you the rights of men! And oh! my father,
My ever honoured sire, it gives thee life.
Evan. My child! my daughter! saved again by thee! [*Embraces her.*

A flourish of Trumpets.—Enter PHOCION, MELANTHON, PHILOTAS, *&c.*

Pho. Now, let the monster yield. My best Euphrasia!
Euph. My lord! my Phocion! welcome to my heart.
Lo! there the wonders of Euphrasia's arm!
Pho. And is the proud one fallen! The dawn shall see him
A spectacle for public view. Euphrasia!
Evander too! Thus to behold you both——
Evan. To her direct thy looks; there fix thy praise,
And gaze with wonder there. The life I gave her,
Oh, she has used it for the noblest ends!
To fill each duty; make her father feel
The purest joy, the heart-dissolving bliss
To have a grateful child. But has the rage
Of slaughter ceased?
Pho. It has.
Evan. Where is Timoleon?
Pho. He guards the citadel; there gives his orders
To calm the uproar, and recall from carnage
His conquering troops.
Euph. Oh! once again, my father,
Thy sway shall bless the land. Not for himself
Timoleon conquers; to redress the wrongs
Of bleeding Sicily the hero comes.
Thee, good Melanthon, thee, thou generous man,
His justice shall reward. Thee, too, Philotas,
Whose sympathizing heart could feel the touch
Of soft humanity, the hero's bounty,
His brightest honours, shall be lavished on thee.
Evander, too, will place thee near his throne;
And shew mankind, even on this shore of being,
That virtue still shall meet its sure reward.
Phil. I am rewarded: feelings such as mine
Are worth all dignities; my heart repays me.
Evan. Come, let us seek Timoleon; to his care
I will commend ye both: for now, alas!
Thrones and dominions now no more for me.
To thee I give my crown: yes, thou, Euphrasia,
Shall reign in Sicily. And oh! ye powers,
In that bright eminence of care and peril,
Watch over all her ways; conduct and guide
The goodness you inspired; that she may prove,
If e'er distress like mine invade the land,
A parent to her people; stretch the ray
Of filial piety to times unborn,
That men may hear her unexampled virtue,
And learn to emulate THE GRECIAN DAUGHTER!
[*Exeunt omnes.*

MATILDA.

BY

FRANKLIN.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.	WOMEN.
MORCAR, *earl of Mercia.*	MATILDA, *a prisoner in the camp of Morcar.*
EDWIN, *earl of Northumberland.*	BERTHA, *her friend.*
SIWARD, *Morcar's friend.*	
Officers, &c.	

Scene—Morcar's camp, and the environs near Nottingham.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Matilda's tent, with a view of the distant country.*

MATILDA, BERTHA.

Mat. I thank thee, gentle Bertha, for thy goodness;
If aught could soothe the anguish of my soul,
Or raise it, from the horrors of despair,
To hope and joy, 'twould be thy generous friendship:
But I am sunk so deep in misery,
That comfort cannot reach me.
Ber. Talk not thus,
My sweet Matilda; innocence, like thine,
Must be the care of all-directing Heaven.
Already hath the interposing hand
Of Providence redeemed thee from the rage
Of savage war, and sheltered thee within
This calm asylum. Mercia's potent earl,
The noble Morcar, will protect thy virtues;
And, if I err not, wishes but to share
His conquests with thee.
Mat. O my friend, oft times
The flowery path, that tempts our wandering steps,
But leads to misery; what thou fondly deem'st
My soul's best comfort, is its bitterest woe.
Earl Morcar loves me. To the generous mind
The heaviest debt is that of gratitude,
When 'tis not in our power to repay it.
Ber. Oft have I heard thee say, to him thou owest
Thy honour and thy life.
Mat. I told thee truth.
Beneath my father's hospitable roof
I spent my earlier, happier days, in peace
And safety: When the Norman conqueror came,
Discord, thou know'st, soon lit her fatal torch,
And spread destruction o'er this wretched land.
The loyal Ranulph flew to William's aid,
And left me to a faithful peasant's care,
Who lived, sequestered, in the fertile plains
Of rich Northumbria: There, awhile, I dwelt
In sweet retirement, when the savage Malcolm
Rushed on our borders.
Ber. I remember well
The melancholy hour. Confusion raged
On every side, and desolation spread
Its terrors round us. How didst thou escape?
Mat. A crew of desperate ruffians seized upon me,
A helpless prey: For, O! he was not there,
Who best could have defended his Matilda.
Then had I fallen a wretched sacrifice

To brutal rage, and lawless violence,
Had not the generous Morcar interposed
To save me: Though he joined the guilty cause
Of foul rebellion, yet his soul abhorred
Such violation. At his awful voice,
The surly ruffians left me, and retired.
He bore me, half expiring, in his arms,
Back to his tent; with every kind attention
There strove to soothe my griefs, and promised, soon
As fit occasion offered, to restore me
To my afflicted father.

Ber. Something, sure,
Was due to generous Morcar for his aid,
So timely given.

Mat. No doubt: But mark what followed.
In my deliverer, too soon I found
An ardent lover, sighing at my feet.

Ber. And what is there the proudest of our sex
Could wish for more? To be the envied bride
Of noble Morcar, first of England's peers
In fame and fortune.

Mat. Never trust, my Bertha,
To outward shew. 'Tis not the smiles of fortune,
The pomp of wealth, or splendour of a court,
Can make us happy. In the mind alone
Rests solid joy, and true felicity,
Which I can never taste: For, oh, my friend!
A secret sorrow weighs upon my heart.

Ber. Then pour it in the bosom of thy friend;
Let me partake it with thee.

Mat. Generous maid!
Know, then, for nought will I conceal from thee,
I honour Mercia's earl, revere his virtues,
And wish I could repay him with myself:
But, blushing, I acknowledge it, the heart
His vows solicit, is not mine to give.

Ber. Has, then, some happier youth———

Mat. Another time
I'll tell thee all the story of our loves.
But, oh, my Bertha! didst thou know to whom
My virgin faith is plighted, thou wouldst say
I am, indeed, unhappy.

Ber. Could Matilda
Bestow the treasure of her heart on one
Unworthy of her choice?

Mat. Unworthy! No.
I glory in my passion for the best,
The loveliest of his sex. Oh! he was all
That bounteous nature, prodigal of charms,
Did on her choicest favourite e'er bestow.
His graceful form, and sweet deportment, spoke
The fairer beauties of his kindred soul,
Where every grace and every virtue shone.
But thou wilt tremble, Bertha, when I tell thee,
He is earl Morcar's brother.

Ber. Ha! his brother!
The noble Edwin! Often have I heard
My father———

Mat. Did lord Edrick know him, then?

Ber. He knew his virtues, and his fame in arms,
And often would lament the dire effects
Of civil discord, that could thus dissolve
The ties of nature, and of brethren make
The bitterest foes. If right I learn, lord Edwin
Is William's firmest friend, and still supports
His royal master.

Mat. Yes, my Bertha, there
I still find comfort: Edwin ne'er was stained,
As Morcar is, with foul disloyalty,
But stands betwixt his sovereign and the rage
Of rebel multitudes, to guard his throne.
If, nobly fighting in his country's cause,
My hero falls, I shall not weep alone;
The king, he loved and honoured, will lament him,
And grateful England mix her tears with mine.

Ber. And doth earl Morcar know of Edwin's love?

Mat. Oh, no! I would not, for a thousand worlds,
He should suspect it, lest his fiery soul
Should catch the alarm, and kindle to a flame,
That might destroy us all.

Ber. I know his warmth
And vehemence of temper; unrestrained
By laws, and spurning at the royal power,
Which he contemns, he rules despotic here.

Mat. Alas! how man from man, and brother oft
From brother, differs! Edwin's tender passion
Is soft and gentle, as the balmy breath
Of vernal zephyrs; whilst the savage north,
That curls the angry ocean into storms,
Is a faint image of earl Morcar's love:
'Tis rage, 'tis fury all. When last we met,
He knit his angry brow, and frowned severe
Upon me; then, with wild distracted look,
Bade me beware of trifling with his passion,
He would not brook it—trembling I retired,
And bathed my couch in tears.

Ber. Unhappy maid!
But time, that softens every human woe,
Will bring some blest event, and lighten thine.

Mat. Alas! thou know'st not what it is to love.
Haply thy tender heart hath never felt
The tortures of that soul-bewitching passion.
Its joys are sweet and poignant; but its pangs
Are exquisite, as I have known too well:
For, oh, my Bertha! since the fatal hour
When Edwin left me, never hath sweet peace,
That used to dwell, with all its comforts, here,
E'er deigned to visit this afflicted breast.

Ber. Too plain, alas! I read thy sorrows; grief
Sits in sad triumph on thy faded cheek,
And half obscures the lustre of thy beauties.

Mat. Talk not of beauty, 'tis our sex's bane,
And leads but to destruction. I abhor
The fatal gift. Oh! would it had pleased Heaven
To brand my homely features with the mark
Of foul deformity, or let me pass
Unknown, and undistinguished from the herd
Of vulgar forms, save by the partial eye

Of my loved Edwin; then had I been blest
With charms unenvied, and a guiltless love.
Ber. Where is thy Edwin now?
Mat. Alas! I know not.
'Tis now three years, since last these eyes beheld
Their dearest object. In that humble vale,
Whence, as I told thee, Malcolm's fury drove me,
There first we met. Oh! how I cherish still
The fond remembrance! There we first exchanged
Our mutual vows; the day of happiness
Was fixt; it came, and in a few short hours
He had been made indissolubly mine,
When fortune, envious of our happiness,
And William's danger, called him to the field.
Ber. And since that parting have ye never met?
Mat. O never, Bertha, never but in thought.
Imagination, kind anticipator
Of love's pleasures, brings us oft together.
Oft as I sit within my lonely tent,
And cast my wishful eyes o'er yonder plain,
In every passing traveller I strive
To trace his image, hear his lovely voice
In every sound, and fain would flatter me
Edwin still lives, still loves his lost Matilda.
Ber. Who knows but fate, propitious to thy love,
May guide him hither.
Mat. Gracious Heaven forbid!
Consider, Bertha, if the chance of war
Should this way lead him, he must come in arms
Against his brother: Oh! 'tis horrible
To think on. Should they meet, and Edwin fall,
What shall support me? And if victory smiles
Upon my love, how dear will be the purchase
By Morcar's blood! Then must I lose my friend,
My guardian, my protector—every way
Matilda must be wretched.
Ber. Is there aught
In Bertha's power?
Mat. Wilt thou dispatch, my friend,
Some trusty messenger with these?—Away.
[*Gives her letters.*
I'll meet thee in my tent—Farewell.
[*Exit Bertha.*
Mean time,
One hope remains, the generous Siward—he
Might save me still. His sympathetic heart
Can feel for the afflicted.—I have heard,
(Such is the magic power of sacred friendship)
When the impetuous Morcar scatters fear
And terror round him, he, and he alone,
Can stem the rapid torrent of his passion,
And bend him, though reluctant, to his will——
And see, in happy hour, he comes this way.
Now fortune, be propitious! if there be,
As I have heard, an eloquence in grief,
And those can most persuade, who are most wretched,
I shall not pass unpitied.

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. Ha! in tears,
Matilda! What new grief, what cruel foe
To innocence and beauty, thus could vex
Thy gentle spirit?
Mat. Canst thou ask the cause,
When thou behold'st me still in shameful bonds,
A wretched captive, friendless and forlorn,
Without one ray of hope to soothe my sorrows?
Siw. Can she, whose beauteous form and fair demeanour
Charm every eye, and conquer every heart,
Can she be wretched? can she want a friend,
Whom Siward honours, and whom Morcar loves?
Oh! if thou knew'st with what unceasing ardour,
What unexampled tenderness and truth,
He doats upon thee, sure thou mightst be wrought
At least to pity.
Mat. Urge no more, my lord,
The ungrateful subject; but too well I know
How much thy friend deserves, how much, alas,
I owe him!—If it be earl Morcar's wish
To make me happy, why am I detained
A prisoner here; Spite of his solemn promise
He would restore me to my royal master,
Or send me back to the desiring arms
Of the afflicted Ranulph, who, in tears
Of bitterest anguish, mourns his long-lost daughter?
Surely, my lord, it ill becomes a soldier
To forfeit thus his honour and his word.
Siw. I own it; yet the cause pleads strongly for him.
If, by thy own too powerful charms misled,
He deviates from the paths of rigid honour,
Matilda might forgive. Thou know'st he lives
But in thy smiles; his love-enchanted soul
Hangs on those beauties, he would wish to keep
For ever in his sight.
Mat. Indulgent Heaven
Keep me for ever from it! Oh, my lord!
If e'er thy heart with generous pity glowed
For the distressed; if e'er thy honest zeal
Could boast an influence o'er the man you love:
Oh! now exert thy power, assist, direct,
And save thy friend from ruin and Matilda.
There are, my lord, who most offend, where most
They wish to please. Such often is the fate
Of thy unhappy friend, when he pours forth
His ardent soul in vows of tenderest passion;
'Tis with such rude and boisterous violence
As suits but ill the hero or the lover.
Siw. I know his weakness, know his follies all,
And feel them but too well: He loves with transport,
And hates with fury. Warmed with fierce desire,
Or strong resentment, his impetuous soul
Is hurried on, till reason quits her seat,
And passion takes the loosely-flowing rein;
Then all is rage, confusion, and despair.
And yet, when cool reflection hath removed

The veil of error, he will weep his faults
With such a sweet contrition, as would melt
The hardest heart to pity and forgiveness.
Oh! he has virtues that may well atone
For all his venial rashness, that deserve
A sovereign's love, and claim a nation's praise;
Virtues, that merit happiness and thee.
Why wilt thou thus despise my noble friend?
His birth and fortune, with the rank he bears
Among the first of England's peers, will raise thee
As far above thy sex, in wealth and power,
As now thou art in beauty.

Mat. Oh, my lord!
'Tis not the pride, the luxury of life,
The splendid robe and glittering gem, that knits
The lasting bonds of mutual happiness:
Where manners differ, where affections jar,
And will not kindly mix together, where
The sweet harmonious concord of the mind
Is wanting, all is misery and woe.

Siw. By Heaven! thou plead'st thy own and virtue's cause,
With such bewitching eloquence, the more
Thy heart, alarmed by diffidence, still urges
Against this union with my friend, the more
I wish to see him blest with worth like thine.

Mat. My lord, it must not be; for grant him all
The fair perfections you already see,
And I could wish to find, there is a bar
That must for ever disunite us—Born
Of Norman race, and from my earliest years
Attached to William's cause, I love my king,
And wish my country's peace: That king, my lord,
Whom Morcar wishes to dethrone; that peace,
Which he destroys: Had he an angel's form,
With all the virtues that adorn his sex,
With all the riches fortune can bestow,
I would not wed a traitor.

Siw. Call not his errors by so harsh a name;
He has been deeply wronged, and souls, like his,
Must feel the wounds of honour, and resent them.
Alas! with thee I weep my country's fate,
Nay wish, perhaps, as well to William's cause,
And England's peace, as can the loyal daughter
Of gallant Ranulph; and would, therefore, joy
To see Matilda lend a gracious ear
To Morcar's suit. Thy reconciling charms
Might soothe his troubled soul, might heal the wounds
Of bleeding England, and unite us all
In one bright chain of harmony and love.
The gallant Edwin too——

Mat. Ha! what of him?
Know'st thou that noble youth?

Siw. So many years
Have past since last we met, by different views
And our unhappy feuds so long divided,
I should not recollect him; but report
Speaks loudly of his virtues. He, no doubt,
If yet he lives——

Mat. Yet lives! why, what, my lord?

Siw. You seem much moved.

Mat. Forgive me, but whene'er
This sad idea rises to my mind,
Of brother against brother armed, my soul
Recoils with horror.

Siw. 'Tis a dreadful thought:
Would I could heal that cruel breach! but then,
Thou might'st do much; the task is left for thee.

Mat. For me? Alas! it is not in my power.

Siw. In thine, and thine alone. O think, Matilda!
How great thy glory, and how great thy praise,
To be the blessed instrument of peace;
The band of union 'twixt contending brothers.
Thou see'st them, now, like two descending floods,
Whose rapid torrents meeting, half o'erwhelm
The neighbouring plains: thy gentle voice might still
The angry waves, and bid their waters flow,
In one united stream, to bless the land.

Mat. That flattering thought beams comfort on my soul
Amidst my sorrows; bear me witness, Heaven!
Could poor Matilda be the happy means
Of reconcilement: could these eyes behold
The noble youths embracing and embraced
In the firm cords of amity and love,
Oh! it would make me ample recompense
For all my griefs, nor would I more complain,
But rest me in the silent grave, well pleased
To think, at last, I had not lived in vain.

Siw. Cherish that virtuous thought, illustrious maid!
And let me hope my friend may still be happy.

Mat. I wish it from my soul: but see, my lord,
Earl Morcar comes this way, with hasty steps,
Across the lawn. I must retire: farewell!
You'll not forget my humble suit.

Siw. Oh! no.
I will do all that loveliest innocence
And worth, like thine, deserve. Farewell: mean time,
Remember, Siward's every wish, the bliss
Of Morcar, Edwin's life, the public peace,
And England's welfare, all depend on thee.
[*Exit Matilda.*
There's no alternative but this; my friend
Must quit Matilda, or desert the cause
We have lavishly promised to support—perhaps
The last were best——both shall be tried——he comes.

Enter MORCAR.

Mor. O Siward! was not that
The fair Matilda, whom you parted from?

Siw. It was.

Mor. What says she? the dear, cruel maid!
Is she still deaf? inexorable still?

Siw. You must not think of her.

Mor. What say'st thou, Siward?
Not think of her!
Siw. No. Root her from thy heart,
And gaze no more. I blush to see my friend
So lost to honour: Is it for a man,
On whom the fate of England may depend,
To quit the dangerous post, where duty calls,
And all the business of the war, to sigh
And whine in corners for a captive woman?
Resume the hero, Morcar, and subdue
This idle passion.
Mor. Talk not thus of love,
The great refiner of the human heart,
The source of all that's great, of all that's good;
Of joy, of pleasure—if it be a weakness,
It is a weakness, which the best have felt:
I would not wish to be a stranger to it.
Siw. Let me entreat thee, if thou valuest life,
Or fame, or honour, quit Matilda.
Mor. Yes;
I thank you for your counsel. 'Tis the advice
Of cold unfeeling wisdom, kindly meant
To make me prudent, and to leave me wretched:
But thus it is, that proud exulting health
Is ever ready to prescribe a cure
For pain and sickness, which it never knew.
Siw. There, too, thou err'st; for I have known its joys
And sorrows too. In early life, I lost
The partner of my soul. E'er since that hour,
I bade adieu to love, and taught my soul
To offer her devotions at the shrine
Of sacred friendship; there my vows are paid:
Morcar best knows the idol of my worship.
Mor. I know and love thee for it: but Oh! my friend,
I cannot force this tyrant from my breast;
E'en now I feel her here, she sits enthroned
Within the foldings of my heart, and he,
Who tears her thence, must draw the life-blood from me.
My morning slumbers, and my midnight dreams,
Are haunted by Matilda.
Siw. To be thus
The slave of one, that scorns thee! Oh! 'tis base,
Mean, and unworthy of thee.
Mor. I will bear
That scorn no longer: thou hast rouzed me, Siward;
I will enjoy the glorious prize; she's mine,
By right of conquest, mine. I will assert
A victor's claim, and force her to be happy.
Siw. That must not be. It ill becomes the man,
Who takes up arms against a tyrant's power,
To adopt a tyrant's maxims; force and love
Are terms, that never can be reconciled.
You will not, must not do it.
Mor. Must not! who
Shall dare oppose me?
Siw. Honour, conscience, love,
The sense of shame, your virtue, and your friend.
Whilst I have life, or power, I will not see
Matilda wronged.
Mor. You are her champion, then,
It seems, her favoured, happy friend, perhaps
Her fond admirer, too. Ill-fated Morcar!
I see it but too well. I am lost, abandoned;
Alike betrayed by friendship, and by love.
I thank you, sir, you have performed your office,
And merit your reward.
Siw. Unkind reproach!
Did I for this desert my sovereign's cause,
My peaceful home, and all its joys, to serve
Ungrateful Morcar? Why did I rebel?
The haughty William never injured me.
For thee alone I fought, for thee I conquered;
And, but for thee, long since I had employed
My gallant soldiers to a nobler purpose,
Than loitering, thus, in idle camp, to hear
A love-sick tale, and soothe a madman's phrenzy.
Mor. You could? Away, and leave me, then: withdraw
Your boasted aid, and bid Northumbria's sons
Bend to the tyrant's yoke, whilst I alone
Defend the cause of freedom, and my country.
Here let us part. Remove your loiterers,
And join the usurper.
Siw. Mark the difference, now,
Betwixt blind passion and undaunted friendship:
You are impatient of the keen reproof,
Because you merit: I can bear it all,
Because I've not deserved it.

Enter an Officer.

Of. Good my lords,
Forgive this rough intrusion; but the danger,
I trust, will plead my pardon. As I watched
From yonder tower, a dusky cloud appeared,
As if from distant troops advancing; soon
I saw their armour glitter in the sun;
With rapid motion they approached; each moment
We must expect them here.
Siw. Why, let them come!
Already I have ordered fit disposal
Of all our little force. Away, good Osmond,
Be silent and be ready. [*Exit officer.*
Now, my friend,
Thou art as welcome to thy Siward's breast,
As dear as ever. When the man I love
Walks in the paths of error, I reprove him
With honest freedom; but when danger comes
Upon him, I forget his faults, and flee
With all a lover's ardour to his rescue;
His sorrows and his wants alone remembered,
And all his follies buried in oblivion.
Mor. Thou hast disarmed me now. This pierces more
Than all the bitter poison of reproach,
Which thou hast poured upon me. Oh! 'twas treason
Against the sacred majesty of friendship,

To doubt thy honour, or suspect thy virtue:
Thou wilt forgive: but, when the wounded mind
Is torn with passion, every touch is pain;
You should not probe so deeply.
Siw. 'Twas my duty.
But come, no more of that. The foe advances.
If we succeed, as my prophetic soul
Foretells we shall——I have some comfort for you——
If not, we'll borrow courage from despair,
And die like men. Thou stand'st upon the rock
Of danger, and the yawning precipice
Opens before us; I will snatch thee from it,
Or leap the gulph, and perish with my friend.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A fortress belonging to* MORCAR.

EDWIN *alone (in chains.)*

Edw. IT is the will of Heaven, and must be done.
The hard-fought field is lost, and here I am
A prisoner in my brother's camp: alas!
That fortune thus should guide me to a foe,
Whom most I wished to shun! We little thought
The troops, by Morcar led, had this way bent
Their ill-directed course: but Providence
Hath so ordained, perhaps, to heal the wounds
Of civil discord. Oh! unhappy Edwin,
For what art thou reserved? No matter what.
Since fate deprived me of my dear Matilda,
Whom I for three long years have sought in vain,
Life hath been irksome to me: this, perchance,
May end it—for, who knows if nature yet
May live within the conqueror's breast, to plead
A brother's pardon! Yet he knows me not,
But soon he must—ha! who comes here? earl Siward!
The second in command, to whom, o'erpowered
By circling foes, and fainting with my wounds,
I yielded up my sword. If fame say true,
He bears a mind too great to look with scorn
On the oppressed, or triumph o'er misfortune.

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. Stranger, whoe'er thou art, be comforted;
Thy fate hath thrown thee into noble hands,
Who know thy merit. May I ask thy name?
Edw. I am a poor abandoned wretch, the sport
Of fortune; one, whose last affliction is
To be a captive, and from every eye
Would wish to hide the story of my fate:
Too soon my name and sorrows will be known.
Siw. Respect is ever due to misery:
I will not urge thee further; all, I hope,
That generous pity could afford to soothe
Calamity, like thine, by my command,
Hath been extended to thee. Here, awhile,
You must remain a prisoner. But, ere long,
I hope to greet thee by a fairer name,
And rank thee as our friend.
Edw. Your generous orders
Have been obeyed, and I acknowledge it
With grateful heart. May I not ask the fate
Of him, who fought so nobly by my side,
That brave old man?
Siw. The gallant Ranulph——
Edw. Yes;
My fellow captive.
Siw. He is safe and free.
Edw. Ha! free! Thank Heaven!
Siw. The generous Morcar, urged
By my entreaties, pardoned and released him,
Though much our soldiers murmured, and demanded
His life and your's; a sacrifice, they said,
Due to the manes of their slaughtered friends;
But mercy has prevailed.
Edw. Whate'er becomes
Of an unhappy wanderer, like me,
For your kind treatment of the aged Ranulph,
Accept my thanks; it was a precious boon;
Morcar may find me not unworthy of it.
To-day I am his captive, but, to-morrow
May see me his deliverer: for, know,
My royal master, the victorious William,
With eagle swiftness, soon will follow me
With twenty times your force. As this shall prove
Or true or false, so deal with me; remember
I warned you of it
Siw. And remember thou,
That I with joy receive the welcome news:
Welcome to me, for I am William's friend.
Edw. Thou canst not then be mine, or England's foe:
With such a heart as thine, so nobly formed
To feel for the afflicted, satisfied,
For so thou seemest, of William's royal right,
What could engage thee in this foul revolt,
This base rebellion?
Siw. What, but the great bond
Of kindred souls, inviolable friendship!
The only solid bliss on this side heaven,
That doubles all the joys of human life,
And, by dividing, lessens every woe.
Edw. Who knows but this day's sad event may prove
The happy means to heal a nation's wounds,
And soothe our jarring factions into peace?
Siw. Had Morcar thought with me, long since that end
Had been obtained; but Morcar is——
Edw. Inexorable;
So I have heard, and therefore little hope

To change his nature. O! could he be wrought
To sweet oblivion of his wrongs; to bury
His deep resentment; mine should be the task,
A task, Heaven knows, I would, with joy, perform,
To reconcile offended majesty;
To soften all his errors, plead his pardon,
And give my sovereign one brave soldier more.
Siw. When next we meet I trust it shall be so:
Meantime, let me prepare him for the change;
Retire a while—ere long we'll send for thee,
For every moment I expect him here:
Thy freedom and thy happiness shall be
My first concern, for thou hast well deserved it.
Edw. Farewell! Be quick in your resolves; the time
Requires it; and be wise ere 'tis too late.
[*Exit Edwin.*
Siw. [*Alone.*] I hope we shall. This well-timed victory,
If rightly used, may smooth our way to peace.
Now, Morcar, all thy happiness depends
Upon thyself alone. Now, friendship, raise
Thy powerful voice, and force him to be happy.
He will, he must—he comes——

Enter MORCAR.

Siw. My conqueror, welcome!
Mor. Thrice welcome to my arms, my noble Siward;
At length we meet in joy; the day is ours;
Thanks to thy friendly aid.
Siw. We must not boast;
'Twas hardly purchased, and has cost us dear:
You followed them too close.
Mor. I own 'twas rash;
My youthful ardour urged the keen pursuit
Too far; and, but for thee, I had been lost.
In war thy arm protects me, and in peace
Thy counsels guide. O! how shall I return
Thy goodness? Thou wert born to save thy friend.
Siw. Away! I'll not be thanked. I've done my duty,
And if thou think'st thyself indebted for it,
Repay me not with flattery, but with love.
E'er since my soul with thine congenial met
In social bands, and marked thee for her own,
Thy interest and thy happiness have been
My first ambition; and when thou art blest
With all thy soul can wish for, Siward, then,
And then alone, will have his full reward.
Mor. O, unexampled faithfulness and truth!
But say, my Siward, is our loss so great?
Siw. The flower of half our troops. But 'tis not now
A time to weep, for I have glorious tidings,
That much import thy happiness.
Mor. Ha! what?
Siw. Know, that amongst our captives, I have ta'en
A noble prize, will make us full amends
For every loss—the gallant Ranulph.
Mor. Ha!
Matilda's father! then I'm satisfied.
The wily chief! by Heaven he shall repay me
For her unkindness: Give him to my rage,
To my resentment, to my injured love.
Where is he, Siward?
Siw. I have set him free.
Mor. Ha! free! Thy ill-timed mercy hath betrayed
Our cause. The tyrant would have ransomed him
With half his kingdom.
Siw. Still thy rapid passions
O'erpower thy reason. What if it should serve
A better purpose; smooth thy paths to bliss,
And gain Matilda for thee!
Mor. O, my friend!
My Siward, do not flatter me: By Heaven,
Her kind consent would give my ravished soul
More true and heart-felt happiness, than could
A thousand victories o'er the proud usurper.
Siw. Know, then, I gave him liberty and life,
On these conditions—That he should withdraw
His powers from William's aid, and never more
Assist his cause; the time would come, I told him,
That he should know to whom he owed the boon,
And how he might repay it.
Mor. That was kind,
Indeed, my Siward; that was like a friend.
O! thou reviv'st my drooping heart; but tell me,
Did my Matilda, let me call her mine,
Did she acknowledge, did she thank thee for it?
Siw. O! I assumed no merit; but to thee,
And to thy generous, unexampled love,
Did I attribute all. She sighed, and wept,
Poured forth a thousand blessings on thy head.
Mor. And dost thou think, my Siward, that one ray
Of hope remains?
Siw. The clouds already vanish;
The prospect brightens round thee; haste and seize
The lucky moment. When the generous mind
Is soothed by obligation, soon it opens
To the mild dictates of humanity,
And softens into sympathy and love.
Mor. O, Siward! could'st thou teach me but to win
That lovely maid——
Siw. The task is half performed
Already, and my friend shall soon be blessed.
One thing, and one alone, remains to fix
Her doubtful heart, if yet a doubt remains.
Mor. O! name it, Siward; if 'tis in the power
Of wealth to purchase, or of victory
In the fair field of glory to acquire,
It shall not long be wanting.
Siw. It requires
No price, but such as Morcar well can pay;
No victory, but the victory o'er thyself,

And thy own passions—Give up thy resentment,
Make peace with William, and Matilda's thine.
Mor. Matilda mine! and must I purchase her
At the dear price of honour? with the loss
Of all my soul holds dear, my country's welfare?
My word——
Siw. Away! whilst prudence warranted
Our honest zeal, I was the first to aid
Thy just revenge; but valour ill-advised,
And ill-exerted in a hopeless cause,
Degenerates into rashness. You mistake
The pride of honour for the pride of virtue.
Mor. And would'st thou have me bend beneath the yoke
Of ignominious slavery, quit the cause
Of heaven-born freedom, and betray my friends?
Siw. I'd have thee just and happy—We have been
Successful, let us now be generous,
Whilst we have something to bestow; nor wait
Till fickle fortune from our brows shall tear
The blasted wreath, and leave us nought to give.
Too long already have we sacrificed,
At proud Ambition's altar, to revenge;
Now let us offer at the shrine of Peace,
And sacrifice——
Mor. To love, and to Matilda;
It shall be so—the struggle's past—away,
My Siward, haste, and tell her, I obey;
Her laws, her king, her master, shall be mine;
I have no will but her's, and in her eyes
Will read my duty—Yet a moment stay—
What will my brave companions of the war,
My fellow soldiers, say? Will they approve
This unexpected change?
Siw. I know them firm
In their obedience, and resolved to act
As you command—But I will see them straight,
And urge such powerful reasons as may best
Secure them to our purpose. Fare thee well.
Mor. Siward, thy kind anticipating care
Prevents my every wish—But say, my friend,
Where is the gallant chief whom we subdued,
Who fought so hardly, and so nobly fell?
Siw. In yonder tent, a wretched prisoner still;
He counts the tedious hours; a heavy gloom
Sits on his brow, as if some deep-felt sorrow
Oppressed his noble mind—We must release him.
Mor. Thou know'st, my Siward, thrice we had o'erpowered
His troops, and thrice his single valour turned
The fortune of the day: Since first I trod
The paths of glory, ne'er did I behold
Such deeds of valour wrought by mortal hand;
I almost envied, though I conquered him.
He wore his beaver up, nor could I trace
His features; but he bears a noble form:
Know'st thou his quality or name?
Siw. Not yet;
He seems industrious to conceal them both
From every eye.

Mor Some deity protects him,
As its peculiar care; for, as I raised
My sword against him, whether the soft passion,
That triumphs o'er me, had unmanned my soul,
I know not; but, bereft of all its power,
My nerveless arm dropped ineffectual down,
And let him 'scape me.
Siw. 'Tis most true; I saw
And wondered at it. When you left the field,
With desperate rage he rushed intrepid on,
And seemed to court his fate, till circling foes
Compelled him to resign, and yield his sword.
Mor. Away! I burn with ardour to forgive,
To free, and to embrace him: fly, my Siward.
Let him approach; he could not wish to meet
In happier hour the master of his fate,
For now, methinks, I could be reconciled
To every foe. Away, my Siward, haste
And send him to me.
Siw. Treat him like a friend,
He may be useful. Such distinguished merit
Must have its influence; he commands, no doubt,
The royal ear, and may procure such terms
As William may with honour yield, and we
Without a blush accept. [*Exit Siward.*
Mor. Farewell! And now,
How stands the great account? Can I acquit
Myself, or shall I be condemned before
Thy great tribunal, all-repaying Justice?
But fair Matilda wipes out every stain;
'Tis she commands me to forgive, and she
Must be obeyed; I'm not the first apostate
From honour's cause the tyrant love has made.
My friend too urged the change—

Guards bring in EDWIN *chained.*

He's here—Strike off
Those ignominious chains—he has deserved
A better fate. [*Guards unchain him.*
Stranger, whoe'er thou art, [*Turning to Edwin.*
Thy gallant bearing in the unequal conflict,
For we had twice thy numbers, hath endeared
A soldier to a soldier. Vulgar minds
To their own party, and the narrow limits
Of partial friendship, meanly may confine
Their admiration; but the brave will see,
And, seeing, praise the virtues of a foe.
Edw. [*Aside.*] O, powerful nature, how thou work'st within me!
Mor. Still silent! still concealed! perchance thou fear'st,
Knowing thy rank and name, I might recal
My promised pardon; but be confident;
For, by that sacred honour, which I hold
Dearer than life, I promise, here, to free
And to protect thee: Didst thou hide from me
My deadliest foe; should William's self appear
Before me, he, who hath so deeply wronged me,
So long opposed; nay, should I hear the voice
Of that adventurous, rash, misguided youth,
Whom yet I cannot hate—my cruel brother,
I could forgive him.

Edw. [*discovering himself.*] Then—behold him here.

Mor. Edwin! Amazement! By what wondrous means,
Mysterious Providence, dost thou unfold
Thy secret purposes! I little thought,
When last we met, what heaven-protected victim
Escaped my sword.

Edw. With horror I recall
That dreadful circumstance. Throughout the battle
I knew, and carefully avoided thee.

Mor. O, Edwin! how, on this propitious day,
Have victory, fame, and friendship, fortune, love
And nature, all conspired to make me blest!
We have been foes too long—Of that no more.
My Edwin, welcome! Once more to thy arms
Receive thy brother.

Edw. Yet a moment stay:
By nature touched, the same accordant string,
That vibrates on thy heart, now beats on mine;
But honour, and the duty, which I owe
The best of kings, restrains the fond embrace
I wish to share, and bids me ask, if yet
In Morcar I behold my sovereign's foe.
If it be so, take back thy proffered freedom,
Take back my forfeit life: I would not wish
To be indebted for it to—a traitor.

Mor. Perhaps I may deserve a better name;
Perhaps I may be changed.

Edw. I hope thou art;
For this I came, for this I yielded to thee,
To tell thee William's strength is every hour
Increasing: if thou mean'st to make thy peace,
Now is the crisis—

Mor. Edwin, stop! nor urge
Such mean unworthy motives as alone
Could thwart my purpose. Morcar cannot fear,
But Morcar can be generous: for, know,
Before I saw thee here, I had resolved
To sheath my sword, and be the conqueror's friend;
For, O! there is a cause——

Edw. Whate'er the cause——
The effect is glorious. Now thou art again
My brother. Here, let us once more unite
The long-dissevered cord. [*They embrace.*

Mor. And never more
May blind resentment, faction, party, rage,
Envy, or jealous fear, dissolve the tie!
And now, my Edwin, blushing, I confess,
Not to thy tender care for Morcar's safety,
To friendship's council, or to reason's voice,
Owe we this wished-for change. A female hand
Directs and wills it.

Edw. Ha! a woman!

Mor. Yes,
If such I ought to call that form divine,
Which triumphs here, who rules my every thought,
My every action guides. In yonder tent
A beauteous captive dwells, who hath enslaved
Her conqueror: She demands the sacrifice;
She would not give her hand to William's foe,
And therefore, only, Morcar is his friend.

Edw. I could have wished, that this important change
Were to the hero, not the lover, due.

Mor. I am above deceit, and own my weakness;
But thou shalt see her—Yes, my Edwin, thou
Shalt bear the welcome tidings to my love.
Thy presence will bear witness to the change;
Thy freedom, and the joyful news thou bring'st
Of our blest union will confirm it to her.
Wilt thou, my Edwin?—

Edw. Do not ask me what
I must refuse. I would do much to serve
A friend and brother; but a task of joy
Ill suits a soul oppressed with griefs like mine.
O! I could tell thee—but 'twould be unkind,
When thou art entering on the paths of bliss,
To stop thee with my melancholy tale.

Mor. Whate'er thy griefs, I pity, and hereafter
May find the means to lessen or remove them;
Mean time, this tender office may divert
Thy sorrows; nay, if thou deniest me, Edwin,
I shall not think our union is sincere.

Edw. Then be it so.

Mor. I'll send a trusty slave,
That shall conduct thee to her. Soon I mean
To follow thee—away—begone and prosper.
But, O, my brother! if thou hast a heart,
That is not steeled with stoic apathy
Against the magic of all-conquering love,
Beware of beauty's power; for she has charms
Would melt the frozen breast of hoary age,
Or draw the lonely hermit from his cell
To gaze upon her.

Edw. Know, thy fears are vain;
For long, long since, by honour's sacred ties,
United to the loveliest of her sex,
Edwin, like Morcar, is to one alone
Devoted, and my heart is fixed as thine.

Mor. Then I am blest. Thy sympathetic soul,
With warmer feelings, shall express my passion,
Waked by the fond remembrance of thy own.
Go, then, thy kind returning friendship prove,
Go, plead with all the eloquence of love,
And, as thou dost thy brother's anguish tell,
Still on thy lips may soft persuasion dwell!
Urge my fond suit with energy divine,
Nor cease till thou hast made the lovely captive mine.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—MATILDA'S *tent, with a distant view of the camp.*

MATILDA *and* BERTHA.

Mat. O, Bertha! I have had such frightful dreams!
They harrowed up my soul.
Ber. It is the work
Of busy fancy in thy troubled mind;
Give it no heed.
Mat. O! it was more, much more
Than fancy ever formed; 'twas real all;
It haunts me still, and every circumstance
Is now before me; but I'll tell thee all.
Scarce had I closed my eyes, to seek that rest,
Which long had been a stranger, when methought
Alone I wandered through a mazy wood,
Beset with thorns and briars on every side;
The mournful image of my wretched state:
When, from a winding walk, the beauteous form
Of my loved Edwin seemed to glide across,
And ran with haste to meet me: But, behold!
A tyger rushed between, and seized upon him:
I shrieked aloud.
Ber. 'Twas terrible.
Mat. But mark
What followed; for a gleam of light broke in,
And saved me from despair: When cross the glade
A generous lion, as with pity moved
At the unequal conflict, darted forth,
And sprung with vengeance on the spotted beast,
Who turned with fury on his natural foe,
And loosed my Edwin; he escaped, and fled:
I waked in agonies.
Ber. Be comforted;
The dream presages good: Some generous friend
Shall save him from the perils of the war,
And give him to thy longing arms again.
Mat. O never, never!

Enter an Officer.

Offi. Noble lady, one
From William's camp, by Morcar's orders sent,
Would crave a minute's conference, and says
He bears some news that may be welcome.
Mat. Ha!
From William's camp! O, flattering hope! who knows
But he may bring some tidings of my love!
Tidings, perhaps, I may not wish to hear.
Perhaps he comes to speak of Edwin's death,
Or Edwin's falsehood—Be it as it may,
I cannot be more wretched than I am.
Conduct him hither. [*Exit Officer.*
O, my fluttering heart!
Look yonder! how imagination forms
What most we wish for; see! he comes! It is,
It is my Edwin—Save me, Bertha! O!——
[*As he enters, she faints.*

Enter EDWIN.

Edw. What do I see? Matilda here! she faints!
Am I deserted, then? abandoned, lost,
Betrayed by her I love! She breathes, she lives!
But not for me—for Morcar! for my brother!
Mat. [*To Bertha.*] Where is he? O! it was delusion all;
The form deceived me. Had it been my love,
He would have flown with rapture to me—See,
He stands far off, and will not look upon me.
Edw. I dare not.
Mat. Is it thus we meet again?
Is this the kind, the tender, faithful Edwin?
Edw. Art thou Matilda? Speak—for I am lost
In wild astonishment. It cannot be.
In Morcar's camp! Is this the lovely captive,
That I should meet?
Mat. All-seeing Heaven,
Bear witness for me: If, from that sad hour
When last we parted, this devoted heart
Hath ever wandered, ever cast one thought,
Or formed a wish for any bliss but thee,
Despise me, Edwin; slight me, cast me off
To infamy and shame.
Edw. I must, I must
Believe thee; yet 'tis strange—when thou shalt know
From whom I came, and what my errand here.
Thou wilt not call me cruel or unkind,
When I shall tell thee I am come to claim
Another's right—O heaven! another's right
To my Matilda! to request thy hand
For Morcar.
Mat. For thy brother!
Edw. Yes, even now
We parted. Here, he told me, I should meet
A beauteous captive; little did I think
It was Matilda, whom he long had wooed;
Whose generous heart, he hoped, would now accept
A convert made to loyalty by love;
She only waited for that blest event,
With mutual ardour to return his passion.
Can it be thus? Alas! thy presence here
Confirms it but too well.
Mat. Appearance oft,
By strange events and causeless jealousy,
Confounds the guilty with the innocent.
But sure my Edwin's noble mind disdains
To cherish low suspicion; 'tis a vice
Abhorrent to thy nature, and Matilda
Will never practise it on thee. True love
Knows not distrust, or diffidence, but rests
On its own faith secure, and hopes to meet
The truth it merits.

Edw. Can this be the voice
Of falsehood? Can those lips——
Mat. Mistaken man!
Could'st thou e'er credit the delusive tale?
Could'st thou believe I had so soon forgot
My plighted faith? But, since I am suspected,
Return, and bear this answer back to Morcar.
First say, I thank him for the choice he made
Of thee to be the herald of his love:
For what is there Matilda can refuse,
That Edwin could request?
Edw. O! that recalls
A thousand tender thoughts——
Mat. Go tell him too,
Whate'er I rashly promised, but to gain
A few short moments, to preserve my king,
And save a father's life, I never meant
To feign a passion, which I could not feel;
For I was destined to another's arms;
To one, who now regardless of his vows
To poor Matilda, after three long years
Of cruel absence from her, comes, at last,
To doubt her honour, and suspect her love.
Edw. O! never, never!——Sooner will I doubt
The powers of nature, and believe these eyes
Can misinterpret every object here,
Than think thee false. O! take me to thy arms,
And bury all my doubts. Canst thou forgive
The jealous warmth of agonizing passion?
Mat. I can; I must. But say, to what blest chance
Am I indebted for this happy moment?
Edw. The chance of war. I am a prisoner here,
And but for thee——
Mat. When I shall tell thee all
That I have suffered, since we parted last,
Thou wilt not blame, but pity poor Matilda.
Meanwhile be calm; it is not now a time
For idle doubts and visionary fears,
When real dangers threat. I see already,
By thy imperfect tale, what misery
Must soon await us, when the fiery earl
Shall know this strange event.
Edw. And wherefore know it?
Why not conceal our passion, till some means
Of freedom offer?
Mat. I abhor the thought.
No, Edwin, no. The crisis of our fate
Approaches. Never let us stain our loves
With crooked fraud and base dissimulation.
Hark! didst thou hear a voice in yonder grove?
Siward in conference with the haughty earl;
Behold them——see—they part—and Morcar hastes,
With quick impatient step, to know his fate.
Now, summon all thy powers.
Edw. I am prepared.
He comes: a few short minutes will determine
Whether Matilda plays the hypocrite,
Or is deserving of her Edwin's love.

Enter MORCAR.

Mor. At length, I hope, Matilda's satisfied.
Edwin has told thee what a sacrifice
My heart hath made. Ambition, glory, pride,
And fierce resentment bend beneath thy power,
And yield the palm to all-subduing love.
Yes, thou hast conquered. I am William's friend;
The struggle's past. I have performed the task
Assigned, and come to claim my just reward.
Mat. By virtuous acts the self-approving mind
Is amply paid, nor seeks a recompense
From aught beside. You have redeemed your honour,
Turned to the paths of duty, and discharged
The debt you owe your country, and your king:
England and William will be grateful for it.
What can you wish for more?
Mor. There is a prize,
More welcome far, beyond whate'er a king
Or kingdom can bestow——thy love——
Mat. My lord!
Mor. If, to have saved thee from the brutal rage
Of pitiless ruffians; if, to have renounced
A victor's claim, and be myself the slave
Of her I conquered; if to have released
My bitterest foe, because allied to thee;
If, after all my cruel wrongs, to accept
The proud oppressor's hand, can merit aught,
I am not quite unworthy of the boon.
Mat. The good and just, my lord, demand our praise,
And generous deeds will claim the tribute due,
The debt of humble gratitude; but love,
Love, that must mark the colour of our days
For good or ill, for happiness or woe,
'Tis not the gift of fortune, or of fame,
Nor earned by merit, nor acquired by virtue.
All the rich treasures, which, or wealth or power
Have to bestow, can never purchase that,
Which the free heart alone itself must give.
Mor. Give it with freedom, then, to him, who most
Hath studied to deserve——
Mat. You talk, my lord,
As if the right of conquest could bestow
A right more precious, and a dearer claim;
But know, for now 'tis time to throw aside
The veil, that long hath hid from Morcar's eyes
The secret of my soul; and say, at last,
I never can be thine.
Mor. Ha! never! Oh,
Recall that word!
Mat. I must not: Edwin knows
There is a bar of adamant between,
That must for ever part us.
Mor. Ha! for ever!
Distraction! can it be? Take heed, Matilda,
I am not to be mocked thus. Oh, my brother!
Didst thou not hear her? But astonishment
Has closed thy lips in silence—Never mine!

And wherefore not be mine?
[*Turning to Matilda.*
Mat. Because I am
Another's—Well I know our hapless sex
(So custom wills, and arbitrary man),
Is taught, in fearful silence, to conceal
The honest feelings of a tender heart:
Else, wherefore should Matilda blush to own
A virtuous passion for the best of men?
Mor. A virtuous passion! grant me patience, Heaven!
I am betrayed, abandoned, lost. Another's!
Some fawning slave, some Norman plunderer,
Rich with the ravished spoils of English valour,
Hath snared her easy heart, and tortured mine.
But I will drag him from his dark abode;
Where'er he lurks, he shall not 'scape my vengeance.
Thou hearest her, Edwin.
Edm. Aye: Who would not wish
To hear the voice of nature, and of love,
Thus nobly pleading by the lips of truth?
Mor. Amazement! Thou art linked with the vile slave,
That hath usurped my right. All, all conspire
To make me wretched.
Edw. Why should Morcar think,
That lovely maid would act beneath herself,
And make so mean a choice? Now, on my soul,
I doubt not but the object of her love
Hath earned the glorious prize, and will be found
Deserving of it.
Mor. Thou know'st him, then?
Edw. I do;
Know him as brave, as noble as thyself:
One who would scorn, howe'er the outward act
Might seem unworthy of him, to do aught
That should disgrace his family and name.
A man he is of yet untainted honour,
Of birth and valour equal to thy own,
Though fortune frowns upon him.
Mor. Now, by Heaven,
But that I know thy eyes were never blest
With my Matilda's charms, I should suspect
Thou hadst betrayed the sacred trust reposed
In thy false heart, by unsuspecting friendship,
And wert thyself the traitor.
Edw. Think so still.
Let fancy, ever busy to torment
The jealous mind, alarm thee with the thought
Of seeing him, whom thou hast thus reviled.
Stand forth and dare the proof; suppose him here
Before thee, ready to assert his claim,
His prior right, to all the joys that love
And fair Matilda can bestow: Then look
On me, and know thy rival in—thy brother.
Mor. Confusion! horror! misery! O, Heaven!
Canst thou behold such complicated guilt,
Such unexampled perfidy, and yet
Withhold thy vengeance? Let thy lightnings blast
The base betrayer! Oh, Matilda! false,
Deceitful, cruel woman!
Mat. 'Tis the lot
Of unprotected innocence to meet
The cruel censure, which to guilt alone
Is due. I've not deceived, I've not betrayed thee;
And, wouldst thou listen to the artless tale
I could unfold———
Mor. Away! I will not hear,
Nor see, nor think of thee. Deceitful villain!
Was this thy kind concern for Morcar's safety?
Was it for this, that subtle Edwin came
A willing captive? Boasted William's strength,
And lured me to a base, inglorious peace,
That, like a midnight ruffian, he might steal,
Unseen and unsuspected, on my love,
And rob me of Matilda?
Edw. I abhor
A thought so mean; the bare suspicion stains,
With such foul blot, my honour and my name,
I will not deign to answer thee. My birth
Alone might prove to any sense but thine,
That I disdain it: 'Tis enough to say,
I am earl Morcar's brother.
Mor. I disclaim
All ties of nature, or of friendship, with thee,
And henceforth hold thee as my deadliest foe:
As such, I will pursue thee, slave; for, know,
Thou art my prisoner still.——Who waits there?
Seize
And guard this traitor———
[*Guards enter, and seize on Edwin.*
Mat. [*Kneeling to Morcar.*] Oh, my lord! if e'er
Soft pity touched thy breast, if e'er thy heart
Felt the warm glow of sympathetic grief
For the unhappy, do not let the rage
Of thoughtless passion urge thee to a deed
Of horror, which, too late, thou wilt repent.
Oh, spare a guiltless brother! spare thyself
The bitter pangs of sad remorse, that soon
Shall harrow up thy soul, when radiant truth
Shall flash conviction on thee. Oh! forgive
And pity———
Edw. Rise, Matilda: 'Tis beneath
The dignity of innocence to kneel
Before proud guilt, and supplicate a tyrant.
Mat. [*Rising.*] I feel the just reproach—Forgive me, Edwin;
Henceforth, I never will disgrace thy love,
By mean submission, Morcar, if thou hop'st
For future peace, or pardon, set us free.
Mor. I'll hear no more; convey her to her tent.
Mat. Edwin, adieu! If honour, virtue, truth,
And mutual love, protect the innocent,
We yet shall meet in happiness—Farewell!
[*Exit Matilda, guarded.*
Mor. Let none have entrance there, but faithful Siward.
Would he were here, that I might pour my sorrows
Into his friendly bosom! Oh, Siward!
Where art thou?—Ha, he comes!

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. My lord, the troops,
Flushed with their late success, refuse all terms
Of peace with William, and cry out for war
And vengeance———
Mor. They shall have it. Now, by Heaven!
Thou bring'st me glorious tidings—Well, what more?
Siw. They have discovered that the noble prisoner,
Who had surrendered, is thy brother Edwin:
This hath alarmed them; they suspect you both
Of vile collusion, to betray their cause,
And yield them to the tyrant. If, they say,
You mean them fair, let Edwin be confined,
And answer for the treason with his life.
Mor. And so he shall: They could not ask a boon,
Which Morcar would more readily bestow;
Already their request is granted.—See,
The traitor is secured. All-seeing Heaven!
Thou seest how justice will o'ertake the wicked!
Siw. What can this mean? Since last I saw my friend,
How the fair day, that shone so bright upon us,
Is suddenly o'ercast!
Mor. Alas, my Siward!
When thou shalt know—but 'tis enough to say
Matilda's false, and Edwin is—a villain!
Siw. Amazement! can it be?
Mor. It is too true;
And I am lost for ever. Oh, Matilda!
Deceitful woman!
Siw. 'Tis not now a time
For idle plaints: consult your safety: fly
This moment to the camp—your presence there,
And that alone, may quell the rising storm:
Leave Edwin to my care.
Mor. I go, my Siward,
Safe in thy friendship; I entrust to thee
My just revenge. Yon moss-grown tower, that hangs
O'er the deep flood—'tis under thy command—
Place double guard—he must not 'scape—his fate
Shall be determined soon. Whate'er it prove,
It cannot be more wretched than my own.
[*Exit Morcar.*
Edw. [*Pointing to the guards.*] Where is my dungeon? my conductors here
Wait but your orders; give them their commission;
For you, it seems, sir, are to execute
The friendly office: do it, and be happy.
Siw. Guards, set your prisoner free—thou little know'st
Of Siward's soul, to think it joys in aught,
That gives another pain. I have learnt too well,
In sad affliction's hard, but wholesome school,
The lesson of humanity.
Edw. O generous Siward, if thou hast a heart
To feel for others' miseries, pity mine,
And poor Matilda's: she has not deserved
A fate like this.
Siw. Alas! it rives my soul
To see the tender bonds of amity
Thus torn asunder, by the very means,
I fondly thought for ever would unite them;
And the fair structure, which my hopes had raised,
Of love and friendship, in a moment shrunk
From its weak base, and buried all in ruin.
If thou can'st prove thy innocence, as yet
I hope thou wilt, for in that noble mien
I read a conscious pride, that would not stoop
To aught that's base—still may I hope to heal
These bleeding wounds, and soothe him to forgiveness.
Mean time be free. Give me thy sacred word,
The soldier's oath, thou wilt be found whene'er
I call upon thee; and yon tent alone
Shall be thy prison; free to range around,
Far as my guard extends.
Edw. Accept my thanks,
The humble tribute of a grateful heart;
'Tis all I have to give. The time may come,
When Edwin shall repay thee as he ought.
Siw. Is there aught more, which honour, and the duty
I owe my friend, permits me to bestow,
That thou would'st ask?
Edw. Oh! grant me to behold
That injured maid, to take my last farewell!
Then act as fate and Morcar shall determine.
I give the pledge of safety thou requir'st,
And will be found——speak, wilt thou listen to me?
Siw. Of that we will talk hereafter—come—within
I'll hear thy story—thou but know'st me yet
As Morcar's friend; hereafter thou may'st find
I am still more the friend——of truth and virtue.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*An apartment belonging to* SIWARD, *opening to a wood.*

Enter EDWIN *and* MATILDA.

Edw. THANKS to the noble Siward's generous pity
For the distressed; once more we meet, Matilda,
But only meet, alas! to mourn our fate,
To feel each others woes, and to be wretched.
Mat. Eternal blessings wait on him, who thus
Could sweeten sorrow's bitter draught, and make
Captivity a blessing! Oh, my Edwin!
A few short moments, spent with those we love,
Is worth an age of common life.
Edw. With thee,
Indeed, it is; but we are on the verge
Of a dark precipice, and every step
Is dangerous. If Morcar should return,
And find us here together, we are lost
For ever; thou hast seen, and seen with horror,
The desperate rage of his tumultuous soul;
Let us avoid it, let us——
Mat. What, my love?
Thou art my guide, protector, guardian, all
I have to boast on earth. Oh! teach me where
To find some blest asylum for my woes,
And guide my footsteps to the paths of peace.
Edw. Let me entreat thee, then——
Mat. Oh, speak! thou know'st
I have no will but thine.
Edw. Then leave me, leave
This hated roof: I have a friend within,
Who shall conduct thee to the royal camp
In safety; bear this signet to the king;
He will protect thee, and whatever fate
Decrees for me, Matilda may be happy.
Mat. Oh! never, never! safety dwells with thee,
And thee alone. Without my faithful Edwin,
The peopled city, and the crowded court,
Would be a desert to me. No, my love,
We will not part: the same benignant power,
That led thee hither, that, beyond my hopes,
Brought my lost Edwin to these arms again,
Will still protect that virtue, which it loves.
Edw. Did'st thou not tell me, that this very morn
Thou had'st determined, as the only means
To shun my brother's love, on sudden flight?
Mat. But then I should have fled in search of thee.
Edw. Thou winning softness! how shall I reward
Such unexampled tenderness and truth!
Mat. By flying with me. Come, my love, lead on!
I'll follow thee to dangers and to death;
Nor perils shall affright, nor labours tire,
When thou art with me.
Edw. No: It must not be.
Mat. Why? What should keep thee here?
Edw. The ties of honour.
Mat. And are they stronger than the bonds of love?
Edw. To Siward's kind indulgence, well thou know'st,
I owe this little interval of peace,
This transient gleam of happiness with thee;
And should I break my sacred word, his life
Might answer for it; would'st thou have me thus
Repay his kindness? No, my love; I may
Be wretched, but I cannot be ungrateful.
Mat. Must thou return, then, to that hateful prison,
When Morcar comes?
Edw. I must. Oh! think, when I
Am pent within a loathsome dungeon, who
Shall shelter, then, thy unprotected virtue?
No Edwin there to succour thee: who knows
What brutal lust and power may dare to act,
On a deserted, beauteous, friendless woman?
Distracting thought! A monarch's vengeance then
Would come too late; would make me poor amends
For my Matilda's violated charms.
Mat. He cannot be so mean, so base of soul;
Or, if he should, I have a dagger here
To save me from dishonour.
Edw. What! by death?
Dreadful alternative! Oh! hazard not
Thy precious life, but seize the lucky moment,
Which fortune gives us, ere it be too late.
Mat. Urge me no more; already I have felt,
Too deeply felt, the pangs of absence from thee:
Another separation would be worse
Than death, and all its terrors. No, my love;
We are embarked on a tumultuous sea,
And must abide the fury of the storm.
The waves of angry fortune may o'erwhelm,
But shall not part us: we will stem the torrent,
Brave the proud ocean's rage, and gain the harbour
Of peace and happiness, or sink together.
Edw. Thou hast foretold the tempest, and behold
It rushes on us.

Enter MORCAR *and* HAROLD.

Mat. Ha! earl Morcar here!
Mor. Harold, I thank thee; thy intelligence
Was but too true.
Traitor! who set thee free? [*Turning to Edwin.*
They would have escaped my vengeance—false Matilda!
'Tis thus I am rewarded for my love,
My ill-timed mercy to a thankless brother.

Back to thy dungeon, slave! guards, drag him hence,
To prison, and to death! [*To the soldiers.*
Edw. Or death, or life,
Are equal to me, if I must be torn
From my Matilda. But, whate'er thy purpose,
Be speedy in thy vengeance, nor delay
The cruel work; for know, thy master comes,
William approaches—to revenge my cause.
Mor. But not to save thee.
Edw. Then, farewell, Matilda,
Perhaps for ever—if we meet no more,
Thou wilt remember—but I will not doubt
Thy honour, or thy love. I know thy truth;
Know thou wilt act as best becomes thy fate,
Whate'er it be, and worthy of thyself.
Mat. Of thee, my Edwin, rather say, of thee.
Yes; I will copy well thy bright example;
I'll not disgrace thy love with woman's weakness,
But part without a tear. I will but stay
To tell thy tyrant brother how I hate,
How I despise him, and then follow thee.
Mor. I'll hear no more—begone! away with him. [*Exeunt guards with Edwin.*
Mat. What for me remains
I know too well; thy odious love, reproach
Unmerited, and threats, which I despise.
Thou think'st I have deceived thee—think so still.
Enjoy thy error. Thou believ'st us guilty;
'Twill make thee happy now. Perchance, to find
Us innocent, may be thy punishment hereafter.
Mor. Aye, 'twas a proof of innocence to fly,
Thou and thy paramour together.
Mat. No;
I scorn a thought so mean. Could I have left
My Edwin, long ere this I might have been
Beyond the reach of tyranny; beyond
Thy hated power; and safe beneath the wing
Of sacred majesty, in William's care.
Mor. In William's care!
Mat. Thy conqueror's—for know
The hero comes—to scatter blessings round him,
To heal his country's wounds, chastise rebellion,
And punish false perfidious slaves like thee.
Mor. By Heavens! she braves my wrath, insults my weakness,
And triumphs o'er her slave.
Mat. There was a time,
When, with an eye of pity, I beheld
Thy hopeless love; when I concealed my passion
For the dear idol of my heart, because
I feared 'twould make thee wretched; but thy rage,
Thy cruel treatment of a guiltless brother,
Has cancelled all.
Mor. Then, mark me: If thou hop'st
For Edwin's freedom, shake off this vile passion;
Yield thy proud heart to him, who best deserves it,
And meet me at the altar—Two hours hence,
I shall expect thee there—Beyond that time,
He may not live to thank thee for thy bounty.
Mat. Then let him perish—glut thy tyrant soul
With vengeance: bathe it in a brother's blood.
All ruffian, all barbarian, as thou art,
Thou canst not murder his immortal fame:
Thou canst not rob him of Matilda's love.
But know—when he, for whom alone this pulse
Would wish to beat, this lazy blood to flow
Within my veins—when he shall be no more,
Another life shall satiate thy revenge;
Another victim shall attend thy triumph.
Mor. Thou talk'st it nobly—'tis the common trick,
The affectation of thy sex, to boast
A fancied firmness, which ye never knew;
But with affrighted nature thou wouldst shrink,
When death approaches.
Mat. Put me to the proof.
If thou wouldst punish Edwin, know he lives
Within this breast—strike home, and pierce him there.
Mor. Imperious woman! thou defy'st my power,
And let it crush thee. If thy country bleeds
In every vein; if perjured Edwin falls,
As soon he shall, a victim to my rage;
Thou art the murderer; thou the parricide.
I stand absolved; the guilt is all thy own.
Mat. If it be guilt to suffer keen reproach,
Pain, persecution, terror, chains and death,
For him I love, rather than stain my soul
With foul disloyalty, I am indeed
The guiltiest of my sex, and well deserve
The pangs I feel.
Mor. Thou'st driven me to the pit
Of black despair, and I will drag thee down,
To share the dreadful ruin thou hast made.
Mat. I know thy savage purpose; but, remember,
The hour approaches, when thou shalt repent
This base, unmanly triumph. William comes:
Hear that and tremble, thou unnatural brother!
Nor rocks, nor caves, shall hide thee from his vengeance;
Inglorious, and unpitied, shalt thou fall,
And after ages shall consign thy name
To endless scorn, and infamy immortal.
[*Exit Matilda.*
Mor. Inexorable judge! I stand condemned,
And shall await my doom; but not alone,
Or unrevenged, shall Morcar fall—henceforth
I bid adieu to love, and all his train
Of fond delusions. Vengeance! I am thine,
And thine alone: Thou daughter of despair!
Destructive goddess! come, possess my soul
With all thy terrors—Yes; it shall be so.
A few short hours are all that niggard fate
Will deign to spare me; I'll employ them well,
For I will crowd into the narrow circle
A little age of misery and horror.
Ha! Siward here! what brought thee hither?

Enter SIWARD.

Siw. Pity
For the distressed. I knew thou wert unhappy,
And came where duty called, to pour the balm
Of friendship in, and heal thy wounded heart.
Mor. O, they have pierced too deep; even thou, my friend,
Thou hast betrayed me: was it not unkind
To set my prisoner free; to let him meet
Matilda, and conspire against my life?
Siw. Impossible! by Heaven, the artful story
He told, so wrought upon my easy soul,
I thought him innocent.
Mor. Hast thou not heard—
Siw. From Harold only an imperfect tale;
So strange I could not credit it.
Mor. Alas!
'Tis all too true: I am the veriest slave,
The meanest wretch, that e'er was trampled on
By an imperious woman: O, my friend!
My Siward! I have nought on earth but thee:
Shouldst thou forsake me in this hour of terror!
But sure thou wilt not!
Siw. No: whate'er the will
Of wayward fortune may determine for us,
Behold me ready to partake thy fate.
If we must sue for peace, let Siward bear
The olive for thee: if once more we cast
The desperate dye of battle, let me perish
By Morcar's side. Come, let us on together;
Shake off this load of unavailing sorrow,
And seek the field; there, if we fall, we fall
With honour: if we rise, we rise to—glory.
Mor. Talk not of glory to a wretch like me,
Bereft of every hope. There was a time,
When that enlivening call would have awaked
My active spirit, and this drooping heart
Bounded with joy; but, my Matilda lost,
Revenge alone——

Enter a Messenger to SIWARD *with letters.*

Siw. From Walstcoff these?
'Tis well—retire. [*Exit Messenger.*
[*Reads.*]——How's this? then all is lost.
He writes me here, that William's fame in arms,
Spite of his cruel and oppressive laws,
Hath raised him friends in every part: already
The northern rebels are dispersed, and thousands
Flock to the royal standard. To resist
Were madness.
Mor. And to yield were cowardice
More shameful.
Siw. What must we resolve on?
Mor. Death:
The wretch's only hope, the wished-for end
Of every care: but I would meet him cloathed
In all his terrors, with his reeking spear,
Dipt in the blood of an ungrateful mistress,
And a false happy rival: Then, my Siward,
Shalt thou behold me welcome the kind stroke,
And smile in agony.
Siw. Unhappy youth!
The storm beats hard upon thee; but our fate
Will soon be fixt, for William comes to-morrow.
Mor. To-morrow! ha! then something must be done,
And quickly too. If William comes, he comes
To triumph over us: then, my Siward, who
Shall punish Edwin? who—shall wed Matilda?
I cannot bear it—If thou lov'st me, Siward—
For now I mean to try thy virtue—swear
By all the powers, that wait on injured honour,
Whate'er my anxious soul requests of thee,
Thou'lt not refuse it.
Siw. By the hallowed flame
Of sacred friendship, that within this breast,
Since the first hour I sealed thee for my own,
With unremitted ardour still hath glowed,
I will not—Speak, my Morcar, here I swear
To aid thy purpose.
Mor. 'Tis enough; and now
Come near, and mark me: Thou command'st the tower
Where Edwin is confined.
Siw. I do.
Mor. Methinks
It were an easy task—you understand me—
Justice is slow, and William comes to-morrow.
Thy friendly hand———
Siw. My lord!———
Mor. Thou tremblest——Well, another time, my Siward,
We'll talk on it—shall we not? Thou mean'st to do
As thou hast promised?
Siw. Certainly.
Mor. Then speak,
And do not trifle with me.
Siw. Sure, my lord,
You cannot mean to———
Mor. Is he not a villain?
Siw. I fear he may be so.
Mor. A hypocrite?
Siw. He hath, perhaps, deceived you, and deserves———
Mor. To perish.
Siw. No; To suffer, not to die;
Or, if to perish, not by Morcar's hand,
Or Siward's—Oh! 'tis horrible to shed
A brother's blood———
Mor. A rival's.
Siw. Nature———
Mor. Love———
Siw. Humanity———
Mor. Matilda———
Siw. [*Aside.*] Gracious Heaven!
That passion thus should root up every sense
Of good and evil in the heart of man,
And change him to—a monster!
Mor. Hence! away!
And leave me—From this moment I will herd
With the wild savage in yon leafless desert,
Nor trust to friendship—but another hand——

Siw. [*Musing.*] Ha! that alarms me—then it must be so;
And yet how far———
Mor. You pause.
Siw. I am resolved——
Mor. On what?
Siw. To serve, to honour, to—obey you.
Edwin shall ne'er disturb thy peace again.
Mor. O glorious instance of exalted friendship!
My other self, my best, my dear-loved Siward—
Conscience! thou busy monitor, away
And leave me—Siward, when shall it be done?
To-night, my Siward, shall it not?
Siw. Or never.
Mor. Let me but see the proud Matilda weep;
Let me but hear the music of her groans,
And sate my soul with vengeance—For the rest
'Tis equal all. But tell me, Siward, say,
How shall I know the bloody moment? What
Shall be the welcome signal?
Siw. When thou hearest
The solemn curfeu sound, conclude
The business done—Farewell. When I return,
With tears of joy thou shalt my zeal commend,
And own, that Siward was indeed thy friend.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A Gothic hall.*

Enter MORCAR *and* HAROLD.

Mor. TREASON and foul rebellion in my camp!
But I was born to be for ever wretched,
The sport of fortune. These base mutineers—
Har. Your presence on the battlements, my lord,
Dispersed them soon; they hung their heads in silence,
And all is peace.
Mor. [*Aside.*] It is not so within.
Would it were done, or——
Har. What, my lord?
Mor. No matter.
What urged my soldiers to rebel?
Har. 'Tis thought
The gallant captive did, by secret means,
Excite them to revolt.
Mor. It must be so.
By Heaven! thou makest me happy with the tidings:
His head shall pay the forfeit.
Har. Whilst he lives
We are not safe.
Mor. No more we are, good Harold;
'Tis fit he perish, is it not? What say'st thou?
Har. Prudence demands his life to save your own.
Mor. Oh! thou hast given such comfort to my soul——
Har. My lord——
Mor. Be watchful: Bring me early notice
Of every motion. Go. [*Exit Harold.*
Or I must fall,
Or Edwin.—Hence! ye visionary fears;
Ye vain chimeras, hence!—It is no matter:
Conscience, I heed thee not; 'tis self-defence,
Nature's first law, and I must stand acquitted.
The prudent Siward seemed to hesitate,
As if he wished, but knew not how to shun
The office. He, who could behold my tortures
With all that cold tranquillity, would ne'er
Have ventured to remove them. But I've trusted
The sword of vengeance to a safer hand.
What ho! Who waits?

Enter an Officer.

That soldier, whom thou saw'st
In private conference with me, is he gone
As I directed him?
Offi. My lord, even now
I saw him hastening toward the tower.
Mor. 'Tis well.
When he returns, conduct him to me—Stay;
If Siward comes this way, I'm not at leisure:
I will not see him [*Starts*]. Hark! didst thou not hear
The solemn curfeu?
Offi. No, my lord.
Mor. Not hear it!
It shocks my soul with horror—Hark! again!
Hollow and dreadful! Sure thy faculties
Are all benumbed.
Offi. Indeed, I heard it not.
Mor. Away! and leave me to myself.
[*Exit Officer.*
Methought
I heard a voice cry—stop—it is thy brother!
We loved each other well; our early years
Were spent in mutual happiness together:
Matilda was not there—I do remember
One day, in sportive mood, I rashly plunged
Into the rapid flood, which had well nigh
O'erwhelmed me; when the brave, the gallant Edwin
Rushed in, and saved me.—Shall I, in return,
Destroy my kind preserver? Horrid thought!
Forbid it, Heaven! [*Pauses.*] I am myself again.
All powerful nature! once more I am thine.
He shall not die—Who's there?

Enter an Officer.

My Oswald! fly,
Fly to the tower this moment, haste and save
My brother—Some base ruffian——
Offi. If, my lord,
You mean the noble prisoner there, I fear
It is too late: This moment, as I passed

The citadel, I saw a mangled corse
Drawn forth by Siward's order——
Mor. Slave, thou liest!
Away this moment, bring me better news
On peril of thy life! [*Exit Officer.*
Who knows, but Heaven,
In gracious pity, still may interpose,
And save me from the guilt? It is not done;
It shall not—must not be—All's quiet yet;
I have not heard the signal. [*The bell tolls.*
Hark! he's dead:
My brother's dead!—Oh! cover me, ye shades
Of everlasting night! Hide, if ye can,
A murderer from himself. Ha! see, he comes:
His wounds are bleeding still! his angry eyes
Glare full upon me! Speak—what wouldst thou have?
Matilda shall be thine—He smiles, and leaves me——
[*He pauses, and recovers himself.*
'Twas but the error of my troubled soul.
Oh! guilt, guilt, guilt! [*Throws himself down.*
Here will I lay me down,
And end my days in bitterness and anguish.

Enter SIWARD.

Who's there? Ha! Siward here! [*Rises.*
Speak, murderer, speak!
Where is my brother? Villain, thou hast snared
My soul; my honour's stained, my fame destroyed,
And my sweet peace of mind is lost for ever!
Siw. Matilda will restore it.
Mor. Never, never!
The price of blood! No: Could Matilda bring
The vanquished world, in dowry with her charms,
I would not wed her. O! could I recall
One hasty moment, one rash, cruel act—
But 'twas thy savage hand that——
Siw. I received
Your orders: 'Twas my duty to obey them.
Mor. Where slept thy friendship then? Thou know'st despair
And madness urged me to it—but for thee—
Thy callous heart had never felt the pangs,
The agonies of disappointed love;
Thou did'st not know Matilda—Cursed obedience!
How often has thy insolence opposed
Thy master and thy prince! how often dared
To thwart my will, and execute thy own:
But, when I bade thee do a deed of horror,
And shed a brother's blood—thou could'st obey me.
Siw. Away! this is the trick of self-delusion,
The common cant of hypocrites, who rail
At others' guilt, to mitigate their own.
I've been the mean, the servile instrument
Of thy base vengeance; but thou had'st prepared
Another, a low ruffian, to perform
The bloody office; I detest thee for it,
Despise, abhor thee.
Mor. Thou wert once my friend.
Siw. Henceforth I am thy foe—Thou hast destroyed
The best of brothers, and the best of men.
Mor. Despised by Siward—then my cup of sorrow
Is full, indeed—But this shall—
[*Attempts to kill himself, Siward wrests the sword from him.*]
Ha! disarmed!
But coward guilt is weak as infancy;
It was not so before I murdered Edwin.
Siw. The murderer's punishment should be to live,
And shall be thine; thou know'st not half thy guilt,
Nor half thy sorrows: I shall rend thy soul.
Prepare thee for another deeper wound,
And know that Edwin loved thee! In his hand,
Whilst mine was lifted up for his destruction,
I found this paper; 'tis the counterpart
Of one he had dispatched to William: read it,
And tremble at thy complicated guilt.
Mor. [*taking the paper.*] What's here? He pleads my pardon with the king,
Ascribes my frantic zeal, in Edgar's cause,
To ill-advised warmth, and recommends
His—murderer to mercy! Horrid thought!
I am the vilest, most abandoned slave,
That e'er disgraced humanity—O Siward!
If thou hast yet, among the dying embers
Of our long friendship, one remaining spark
Of kind compassion for the wretched Morcar,
Lend me thy aid, to shake off the sad load
Of hated life, that presses sore upon me.
Siw. Though thou'rt no longer worthy of my friendship,
Deaf to the cries of nature, and the voice
Of holy truth, that would have counselled thee
To better deeds, yet hath my foolish heart
Some pity for thee—After crimes, like these,
There is but one way left. Say, wilt thou patient wait
Till I return?
Mor. I will.
Siw. Remember, Morcar,
You promised me—I have a draught within,
Of wondrous power, that in a moment lulls
The tortured soul to sweet forgetfulness
Of all its woes: I'll haste and bring it thee;
'Twill give thee rest and peace. [*Exit Siward.*
Mor. I hope for ever.
But where's the lost Matilda? who shall comfort
That dear unhappy maid, whom I have robbed
Of every bliss. O, save me from the sight,
Ye pitying powers!

Enter MATILDA.

She comes—distraction!
Mat. Oh!
My lord, permit—
Mor. Away—I know thee not.

Mat. Not know me! 'tis the poor distressed Matilda,
Who comes to ask forgiveness for the rage
Of frantic love; the madness of despair,
That urged me to such wrath and bitterness
Of keen reproach; but pardon— [*Kneels.*
Generous Morcar,
A woman's weakness: Speak, and make me blest.
Alas! he hears me not.
Mor. Matilda, rise;
I pray thee leave me— [*Weeps.*
Mat. Gracious Heaven! he weeps;
Propitious omen! O, my lord! those tears
Are the soft marks of sympathizing woe,
And seem to say, I shall not plead in vain,
Mor. Ask what thou wilt, for know, so dear I hold
Matilda's happiness, that, here I swear,
If all the kingdoms of the peopled earth
Were mine to give, I'd lay them at her feet:
But much, I fear, they would not make her happy.
Mat. Alas! my lord, Matilda's happiness
Is centered all in one dear precious jewel;
'Tis in thy keeping—Edwin—
Mor. What of him?
Mat. Is innocent.
Mor. I know it.
Mat. Just and good;
He never meant to injure thee; indeed,
He did not.
Mor. I believe it, for his nature
Was ever mild and gentle.
Mat. Good my lord,
You mock me.
Mor. No, Matilda; speak, go on,
And praise him: I could talk to thee for ever
Of Edwin's virtues—
Mat. Then thou would'st not hurt
His precious life, thou would'st not—
Mor. I would give
A thousand worlds to save him.
Mat. Would'st thou? then
My prayers are heard, thou hast forgiven all,
And I am happy. Speak, is Edwin free!
Mor. From every care—would I were half so blest!
Mat. What mean you? Ha! thy eyes are fixt with horror,
Thy looks are wild. What hast thou done? O! speak.
Mor. Matilda, if thou com'st for Edwin's life,
It is too late—for Edwin is no more.
Mat. And is my Edwin slain?
Mor. Ay: Basely murdered.
O! 'twas the vilest, most unnatural deed
That ever—
Mat. Blasted be the cruel hand,
That dealt the blow! O, may his guilty heart
Ne'er taste of balmy peace, or sweet repose!
Mor. But ever, by the vulture conscience torn,
Bleed inward, still unpitied, till he seek
For refuge in the grave.
Mat. Nor find it there.
Mor. 'Tis well: Thy curses are accomplished all;
I feel them here within—for know—'twas I.
I gave the fatal order, and my friend,
My Siward, has too faithfully performed it.
Mat. Siward! impossible! There dwells not then
In human breast, or truth, or virtue—O!
Unnatural brother! but I will be calm.
Mor. Alas! thy fate is happiness to mine;
For thou art innocent.
Mat. And soon, I hope
To be rewarded for it. O! my Edwin,
Matilda soon shall follow thee—thou think'st
I am unarmed, deserted, doomed, like thee,
To hated life; but know, I have a friend,
A bosom-friend, and prompt, as thine, to enter
On any bloody service I command.
[*Draws a dagger.*
Mor. Command it then for justice, for revenge!
Behold! my bosom rises to the blow;
Strike here, and end a wretched murderer—
Mat. No;
That were a mercy thou hast not deserved;
I shall not seek revenge in Morcar's death,
In mine thou shalt be wretched—
[*Attempts to stab herself; Morcar lays hold of the dagger.*
Mor. Stop, Matilda—
Stop thy rash hand! the weight of Edwin's blood
Sits heavy on my heart. O! do not pierce it
With added guilt.
Mat. No more! I must be gone
To meet my Edwin, who already chides
My lingering steps, and beckons me away.
Mor. Yet hear me! O! if penitence and prayer,
If deep contrition, sorrow, and remorse,
Could bring him back to thy desiring eyes,
O! with what rapture would I yield him now
To thee, Matilda—bear me witness—Ha! [*Starts.*
'Tis he—Look up, dear injured maid—he comes
To claim my promise.
Mat. It is, it is my Edwin!

Enter SIWARD *and* EDWIN.—EDWIN *runs and embraces* MATILDA.

Mor. O unexpected bliss! what gracious hand—
Siw. Behold the cordial draught I promised you!
I knew thy noble nature, when the storm
Of passion had subsided, would abhor
A deed so impious—'Tis the only time,
That Siward ever did deceive his friend.
Canst thou forgive?
Mor. Forgive thee! O thou art
My guardian angel, sent by gracious Heaven
To save me from perdition. O, my brother!
I blush to stand before thee—wilt thou take

From these polluted hands, one precious gift?
'Twill make thee full amends for all thy wrongs.
Accept her, and be happy.
[*He joins the hands of Edwin and Matilda, then turning to Siward,*
That vile slave
Whom I employed—
Siw. I guessed his horrid purpose,
Watched every step, and as the villain aimed
His poniard at the guiltless Edwin's breast,
Turned sudden round, and plunged it in his own.
The bloody corse was dragged—
Mor. I know the rest.
O, Siward! from what weight of endless woe
Hath thy blest hand preserved me!
Edw. O, my Matilda! how shall we repay
Our noble benefactor? Much I owe
To gallant Siward, but to Morcar more:
Thou gav'st me life, but my kind, generous brother
Enhanced the gift, and blessed me with Matilda.
Mat. [*To Morcar.*] Words are too poor to thank thee as I ought;
Accept this tribute of a grateful heart,
These tears of joy; and, O! may every curse
My frantic grief for Edwin poured upon thee,
Be changed to dearest blessings on thy head!
Mor. Alas! thy blessings cannot reach me. Guilt
May plead for pardon, but can never boast
A claim to happiness: I only ask
A late forgiveness. If a life of sorrow,
And deep remorse, can wash my crimes away,
Let them be buried, with me, in oblivion,
And do not curse the memory of Morcar.
[*Turning to Edwin.*
O, Edwin! say, canst thou forgive the crime
Of frantic love, of madness and despair?
Edw. As in my latest hour from Heaven I hope
Its kind indulgence for my errors past,
Even so, my brother, from my soul, I pardon
And pity thee.
Mor. Then I shall die in peace.
Edw. Talk not of death, my brother; thou must live
To see our happiness complete, to hear
My sweet Matilda pour forth all her heart
In rapturous thanks to thee, and to thy friend;
And grateful Edwin bless thee for thy bounties.
Mor. It must not be: I know too much already,
Of Morcar's weakness, and Matilda's power;
They are not to be trusted. No, my Edwin,
Morcar shall never interrupt thy joys.
Far from thy sight, and from the haunts of men,
In some deep distant solitude retired,
To pious sorrow will I dedicate
My short remains of wretched life, and strive
To make my peace with Heaven and wronged Matilda.
And if, perchance, in after-times, some bard,
Struck with the native horrors of my tale,
Should bid the historic muse record it—let him,
By my example, teach a future age
The dire effects of loose, unbridled rage;
Teach thoughtless men their passions to controul,
And curb the sallies of the impetuous soul,
Lest they experience worse than Morcar's woe,
Nor find a Siward—to prevent the blow.
[*Exeunt omnes.*

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